THE AFGHANS

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THE AFGHANS

By

MOHAMMED ALI

KABUL
1969

452885

1st Edition *1958*
2nd Edition *1965*
3rd Edition *1969*

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1969

PRINTED AT
THE PUNJAB EDUCATIONAL PRESS, NABHA ROAD LAHORE (PAKISTAN)
AND PUBLISHED BY PROF. MOHAMMED ALI
KABUL UNIVERSITY, KABUL

PREFACE

Though there is no dearth of scholarly works on Afghanistan, a popular book dealing with the Afghan way of life is difficult to find. In 1958, I wrote a pamphlet on the manners and customs of the Afghans, which was very warmly received in literary circles both within the country and outside Afghanistan. A second edition came out in 1965. Both of these booklets are now out of print; nor were these comprehensive enough to meet the growing interest that people all over the world now take in Afghanistan and in her people. Hence the publication of this revised and enlarged edition, which aims at giving the reader a few simple hints to help in his knowledge of the people, their way of life, their trends of thought and their aspirations.

The manners and customs of the Afghans, a race as ancient as Assyrians, yet modern, cannot but rouse interest, especially at this juncture of history when, under the impact of modern civilisation "old order changeth yielding place to new," a new Afghanistan is coming into

being. Nowhere in the world can be found such happy blending of the old and new, of today's creative comforts and yesterday's traditions, of sophisticated luxury and tranquil beauty, of exciting sports and lazy contentment. It is all here, the year round, in Afghanistan.

In a heterogeneous community like the Afghans, some of whose traditions are lost in remote antiquity, it is easy to find practices among certain sections of the people that might revolt modern conception. At the same time it can be seen that they are heirs to institutions and schools of thought which have elicited admiration from all. Few writers, however, view all this together; the general tendency being either to exaggerate their drawbacks or to idealize their virtues.

Afghanistan is enjoying today her 5,000 years' life of full glory and splendour. She is proud of her history, her monuments, and her cultural heritage. She is the mother of democracy, the birthplace of two important religions—Hinduism and Zoroastrianism and the original home of the Aryans, forefathers of most of the present progressive nations.

I sincerely hope that this book will help removing some of the wrong ideas and false notions that prevail about this manly race, and pave the way for better understanding and strengthening of friendly relations between Afghanistan and the outside world. If this object is achieved, the author will think his humble efforts amply rewarded.

It is not possible to express my gratitude to all those who have been helpful to me in the compilation of this book. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Maliha of the Ministry of Culture and Information for her co-operation in supplying me with necessary illustrations.

And finally, I would like to express my thanks to my daughter, Dr. Mrs. Shireen Zaman, who gladly undertook the onerous task of correcting the proofs.

MOHAMMED ALI

Karta 4,
Kabul, Afghanistan.

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CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Afghanistan is an important Muslim country of Central Asia. It has an area of about 700,000 sq. kms., and an estimated population of 15,000,000. It is nearly 1200 kms., long, stretching from east to west, and about 800 kms., wide at its widest.

In shape it bears resemblance to the right hand fist, the thumb stretching northeast to touch Sinkiang. Northern part of the country, with the exception of northeastern corner, is flat, rarely more than 600 metres above sea-level. This is the Bactrian plain, so famous in history. It was extremely fertile and productive, and was irrigated by a fine system of irrigation canals. Even now it is the home of the famous *karakul* sheep and fine breeds of horses.

Situated at the centre of ancient world and on the famous Silk-route, Afghanistan was large enough to sustain a vigorous society, and rugged enough to offer major terrain obstacles to invaders. A natural barricade wedged between Iran, Siberia, Sinkiang, and the Indian sub-continent,

Afghanistan has always been a pivot point and in the words of Dr. Iqbal, a throbbing heart of Asia. As keepers of the crossroads, the Afghans have battled an endless stream of invaders, who have funnelled into their land through the high mountain passes.

The history of Afghanistan is determined to a large extent by its environment and its geographical position. The north is cut off by a gigantic mountain-wall of the Hindu Kush, running through the heart of the country from northeast to southwest. This formidable barrier is pierced by a large number of passes. All these approaches to the Indus basin have played an important part in Afghan history. It was through them that from time immemorial migratory hordes, peaceful traders and pilgrims, and conquering armies poured over the fertile plains below.

Afghanistan is a land of violent contrasts. More than half of it is a high plateau traversed by lofty mountains, some over 6,000 metres high, snow-capped for the greater part of the year, while the other half is mostly flat and sandy. The valleys, surrounded by hills, are extremely

beautiful and appear like green gems set in the lap of mountains. That is why the country is often compared with Switzerland in scenic beauty. Gushing streams, with clear bubbling waters, and cool moving branches of the weeping willows and huge poplar and plane trees add to their charms. On the other hand, the deserts are mostly desolate and dusty, where the very wind is often suffocating and poisonous.

Similarly Afghan seasons know no moderation ; winters are cold, wet and muddy; summers are hot, dry and often dusty. Such is the case with night and day, shade and sunshine, when differences of temperature are sometimes breath-taking. At midday the air may thrill with a dry heat, while at sunset it falls down swiftly with the soothing effect of water after thirst. The air is clear, cool and still, vistas expand, and one can advance unhindered to any horizon. The Hindu Kush, with snow-covered peaks, looms enormous, gleaming as the full moon.

The temperament of the Afghans, their dress, and their outlook on life could be no exception to this general rule. Like the climate

of his country and the structure of the land, an Afghan veers between extremes and knows no happy medium. Either he is conservative, steeped in ignorance, bigotry and superstition, or he is extremely enlightened, highly cultured and nobly broad-minded. He may be a loving friend, or an implacable enemy. He will sacrifice his all, including his life, for the sake of his friend, or he may avenge his grievances though it may take him years to accomplish.

Afghan's geographical environment, too, has had a deep and lasting effect on his customs, character, physique, clothes and even on his way of thinking. The mountainous nature of the country and the difficult terrain present a very serious problem in the construction of roads. This lack of means of transportation and communication, until only recently, was the chief stumbling block in the unification of the different tribes. Journeys were difficult and interchange of ideas and customs rather impossible. It resulted in dividing the people into clans and tribes, each leading for the most part an isolated independent life, preserving its peculiar dialect, culture and customs.

There are no authentic records of the aborigines who lived in Afghanistan before the advent of the Aryans. From historical evidence it is clear that Afghanistan, which at one time was the crossroad of Asia, has seen more invasions in the course of her checkered history than any other nation in the world. Each migratory horde left its mark on the inhabitants and shaped their character and affected their way of life. The Aryans, after making Afghanistan their home for centuries, were at last forced to migrate. One branch went to India, while others took to Iran and the distant western countries. Then came the Achaemenians, followed by the Greeks, Parthians, Scythians, Yueh-chis, Ephthalites, Turks, Arabs and Mongols, to name a few of the many races which held possession of parts of the country from time to time and left their impressions upon it. Some of these races kept apart and retained most of their original characteristics, while others merged into the general population and lost most of the traces of their remote origin. The population even today is of mixed origin, yet through all this apparent diversity, there runs an underlying unity. In spite of differences of

and Media. From there they, at some subsequent period, emigrated eastward into the mountainous country of Ghor, where they were called by the neighbouring peoples "Bani Afghan" and "Bani Israel"—the children of Israel. In corroboration of this we have the testimony of the Prophet Esdras to the effect that the Ten Tribes of Israel, who were carried into captivity, subsequently escaped and found refuge in the country of Arsareth, which is supposed to be indentical with the Hazara country of present day, of which Ghor is a part. At the time when Mohammad announced his mission, Khalid-bin-Waleed, a chief of the Quresh tribe, came to them with the tidings of the new faith and an invitation to join the Prophet's standard. Khalid's mission was successful and he returned to Medina accompanied by a deputation of the Afghans numbering to seventy-six persons. They fought so well and successfully in the cause of the Prophet, that Mohammad, on dismissing them to their homes, presented them with valuable gifts, complimented them on their bravery, and giving them his blessings foretold a glorious career for their nation. As a mark of special favour and distinction, the Prophet

language, race and sect, the fundamental principles of religion and Afghan cultural heritage hold their immemorial sway over the majority of the population.

The principal races and tribes that make up the 15,000,000 population of the country are: the Afghans proper or the Pashtoons, the bulk of which are derived from Indo-European stock and constitute the great majority. Next in number are the Tajeks who, too, are of Aryan origin. The rest are the Mongoloid Hazaras, the Uzbeks, the Turkomans and the Kirghiz. Other small minorities include the fair-skinned Nuristanis (old Kafirs) of pure Aryan stock, the Arabs, the Baluchis, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews. Beside Pashto and Persian (more properly Dari), a large number of dialects are also spoken in different parts of the country.

According to a popular legend the Pashtoons are of Jewish origin, and through Qais descended from Saul, King of Israel. Traditions refer to Syria as the country of their residence at the time they were carried away into captivity by Nebukhdnezzar and planted as colonists in different parts of Persia

was pleased to change the Hebrew name of Qais, their leader, to the Arab one of Abdur Rashid.

Qais, as the story goes, married a daughter of Khalid, and by her he had three sons—Saraban, Batan, and Ghur Ghasht, the progenitors of Afghans.

Indeed, the time is past for ever to call the Afghans of Semitic origin, for Pashto, their language, does not bear any resemblance to Hebrew or any other Aramaic language. At present all agree that Pashto belongs to the Indo-Germanic family of languages.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From the earliest times Afghanistan has been the meeting ground of various races and different cultures. As it stood on the highway connecting East and West, it was naturally affected by the streams of the invading hordes and by the ebb and flow of the nations and tribes that shaped the history of this continent. It was here that the Aryans for the first time took to a settled life, built cities, and framed a rudimentary form of democratic government, in which the people had a say, through their councils (Sabhas), in the administration of the country. The Aryans of the olden days chose their kings from among the nobility, but they selected their generals for their bravery upon the battle-field. The kings possessed great powers, but they did not rule as absolute monarchs. From time to time the freemen assembled in a meeting to discuss matters of State and to make important decisions.

Again it was here on the Afghan soil that Rigveda, the first literary record of the Aryans,

was composed and Zoroaster preached his monotheistic religion, and taught men the lessons of good thinking, good speaking and good working.

The dawn of recorded and authentic Afghan history can be placed around 600 B. C. It is then that we have the first historical evidence of foreign political intervention as distinct from tribal migrations. Cyrus the Great of Persia invaded Afghanistan and after a hard struggle lasting for about five years was able to lay his hand on some parts of the country. His successor, Darius I (521-485 B. C.), was more successful and penetrated as far as the Indus Valley and West Punjab. This provided the opportunity for the first Greek writers to visit Afghanistan and the Indus Valley. In the 4th century B. C., Persian control relaxed, leaving behind a medley of petty States, but Persian influence lingered on for a long time and can be seen in the pillars and lion capitols of Asoka, the Mauryan King. We can also find its influence in solar cults and in the idea of divine monarchy.

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With the advent of Alexander the Great a new page is opened in Afghan history.

Having overthrown the Persian King, Darius III, Alexander conquered Bactria after a hot contest of four years (331-327 B. C.). Then he crossed the Indus and was welcomed by the ruler of Taxila, who was at odds with his neighbouring chiefs. Alexander, after reducing northern India, returned to Babylonia *via* Baluchistan and southern Iran. He did not live long to consolidate his far-flung empire which he had conquered within the space of ten years. Like a meteor he came and vanished from the scene and he soon became a subject of legends and folk-lores.

The first permanent consequence of Alexander's adventure in Asia was the opening of practical routes between East and West. Besides, the feasibility of the sea-route was also proved by Alexander's fleet under Nearchus. This Hellenistic age which followed shortly after Alexander's death, kept those routes open for many centuries, long after the rule of the Graeco-Bactrian Kings came to an end.

Alexander left behind in Bactria a tenacious Greek settlement, whose chiefs having achieved independence from the Seleucids proceeded to

implement the plan which he had left incomplete. These Greek settlers in Bactria were able to lay the foundation of a strong national Government, Graeco-Bactrian as it is called, and which was destined to last with fluctuating fortunes for about two centuries, playing a prominent role in the cultural development of the country.

It was about the middle of the third century B. C., during the reign of Asoka the Great, when southern Afghanistan was a part of the Mauryan empire, that Buddhism gradually found its way into the country. It was again on the Afghan soil that Greek realism intermingled with Indian spiritualism, resulting in the Graeco-Buddhist Art of Gandhara or more properly Gandhara School of Art. The first figure of the Buddha, depicting the "Saviour" with the features of Hellenic Apollo came into being, and an entire Buddhist iconography sprang into existence. Between the first and seventh centuries A. D., especially after Buddhism was turned out of its original home (India), Afghanistan became a great seat of that religion and it was from here that Buddhist literature and art penetrated as far as China and other Far Eastern countries. From the second century B. C., onwards, until

the collapse of the Graeco-Bactrian rule north of the Hindu Kush, the country became a bone of contention between various nomadic tribes such as the Scythians, the Yueh-chis (the Kushans), the Ephthalites, and the White Huns from Central Asia. Early in the Christian era one branch of these invaders established the Kushan empire, under which Buddhism underwent a great change and a new school, Mahayana (the great wheel), replaced the old one, Hinayana (or the small wheel). Kushan power weakened from the third century A. D. onwards, and Kabul and the neighbouring areas fell to the lot of the Ephthalites and the White Huns, who destroyed monasteries, killed the people mercilessly, and turned the smiling face of the country into a wilderness. The Scythians were the spearheads of one of the great folk movements which in historic time have practically burst forth from the immense open space of Central Asia. Hard on their heels came the Yueh-chis, followed by the Ephthalites and the Huns. The last two were Mongolians in race, and they were wilder than all the previous named invaders. They aroused repulsion and struck terror wherever they went.

They could easily be likened to tornado which strikes and destroys and passes away. Such was the deplorable condition of the country, when the Muslim Arabs appeared on the scene. Though the Arabs failed in their attempts to conquer the whole of Afghanistan, yet their missionary zeal had a much better chance of success in this country. Gradually Islam made its way throughout the country and became a link between the ancient civilisation of India and that of the Arabs. Since then Islam is a dominant factor of Afghan life.

The palmy days of Islam in Afghanistan received a severe setback early in the thirteenth century, when the ruthless Mongolian hordes, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, poured into the country, leaving death and destruction in their wake. The flourishing seats of art and culture, such as Balkh—"The Mother of Cities", Bamian, Herat and Ghazni, were either razed to the ground or burnt to ashes. Millions and millions of people, some of them scholars of world-wide fame, were mercilessly butchered. As a result of this catastrophe, unparalleled in human history, a wave of pessimism spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Those

who had had the good luck to escape this general slaughter now took to penance and mortification. The philosophy that "this world is a hell for true believers" gained ground. Every misfortune and even those for which the people themselves were answerable were looked upon as punishment for their past sins and evil deeds (most probably due to the influence of Indian philosophy of transmigration). It was also believed that to combat these mishaps was beyond the means of human beings. This was the beginning of fatalism and pessimism in this country, which, in spite of the lapse of seven centuries and the diffusion of modern knowledge, has not spent its force entirely and is still a dominant factor of Afghan life.*

Afghanistan had hardly recovered from the losses sustained at the hands of the Mongols when another event occurred, one which crippled her trade and deprived her of her central commercial position. The country, as already

*A few years ago, when the Afghan Government launched a programme to fight diseases, such as malaria, smallpox, typhus and tuberculosis, some people only laughed and said; "They are fighting preordained calamities over which man has no control". But now experience, on one hand, and diffusion of modern science on the other, have taught most of them to think otherwise.

mentioned, lay at the crossroads of Asia and held a key position in world trade. Merchants of China and India as well as from distant western countries came to Balkh to exchange their commodities. Balkh was then not only the entrepot of world merchandise but of ideas as well. The opening of the sea-route from Europe to the East *via* the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 by Vasco da Gama dealt a death-blow to the famous Silk Route, which passed through the heart of Afghanistan. The loss of this important link with distant countries and especially with the Western world stopped the inflow of ideas as well as of wealth. Consequently poverty, ignorance, disease and superstition crept into society; the whole of the economic and spiritual structure of the country was transformed. Stagnation and loss of initiative permeated every aspect of life, both material and spiritual. This ascetic outlook encouraged disdain of worldly goods. Indulgence in the satisfaction of the senses was regarded as evil, and the suppression of desire was looked upon as virtuous. Property was compared to a snare, unworthy of a man's attention, while renunciation and resignation were regarded as the true ideals of human life.

Afghanistan had not recovered from the shock it had received at the hands of the ruthless Mongolian hordes, when it was ravished in the 14th century by Tamerlane, another scourge of God.

In the early sixteenth century Baber, a descendant of Tamer lane, occupied Kabul. After being driven from his nativeland beyond the Oxus, he made it the capital of his newly-founded empire, which was destined to expand. Herat was occupied by Persia, which remained a part of the Saffavids until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are perhaps the darkest period of Afghan history. With the eclipse of national rule, the culture of the country also suffered heavily. A static society gradually developed, in which inertia, tradition, superstition, fatalism, provincialism (or regional patriotism), tribalism, blind imitation and complacency became the dominant characteristics.

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw a glimpse of light through the establishment of a small national Government at Kandahar. But instead of consolidating their position

within the country, the Hotaki Afghans made a serious mistake. They plunged right into the heart of Iran and occupied Isfahan, the Persian capital. Another blunder was made shortly afterwards. Instead of ruling Iran from their base at Kandahar, the Afghans shifted their capital within the heart of the occupied country. Cut off from their motherland by hundreds of miles, the handful of Afghans could not maintain their position in a foreign land for more than eight years (1722—1730). The result was most disastrous. Afghan settlers in Iran were killed to a man, and their own motherland was involved in chaos and disorder until the middle of the eighteenth century, when a national uprising took place, and Ahmad Khan, of Sadozai family and the Abdali tribe, was elected king of the Afghans at Kandahar. He assumed the title of Dur-e-Durran (Pearl of Pearls), from which the Abdali tribe became known as the Durranis (1747 A. D.). Soon after the death of this great king, the Durrani empire began to crumble. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the process of disintegration grew more swift. The wars with the Sikhs and the Persians and later on the encroachment and the rivalry

of the two powerful western powers, England and Russia, made Afghan life difficult. The country once more eclipsed into a civil war, which dragged on until the end of the century.

The beginning of the present century saw a new Afghanistan with a new way of life coming into being. After a successful war in 1919, the country found herself free from foreign pressure and was able to lay the foundation of a strong central Government. Since then much attention is being paid to the diffusion of modern knowledge and useful arts. Ignorance, superstition, disease, hunger and poverty are being combated successfully. Educational and intellectual progress is opening the eyes of the people even in the remotest parts of the country and is paving the way for social reforms and national awakening. The whole attitude towards life and society is being changed; injurious tribal customs and feudal laws are being cast aside, and pessimism and conservatism are giving way to optimism and enlightenment.

CHAPTER III

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE AFGHANS

Afghan society is highly heterogeneous from the point of view of geography as well as culture. Thus any attempt at generalizing and drawing conclusions from such a society as a whole will be nothing but misleading and erroneous. Here only those manners and usages are discussed which are nearly common to all sections of the people living in Afghanistan.

Love of Independence.—One of the most important characteristics of the Afghans is their indomitable love of independence. The Afghans would patiently bear their misfortune or poverty, but they cannot be made to reconcile themselves to foreign rule howsoever enlightened and progressive it may be. It is true that they have been transiently subdued, but never enslaved or permanently conquered or held in subjugation by a foreign power. The experience of history derived from the period of Alexander the Great right up to the melancholy fate of the

"Army of the Indus" and other British forces in Afghanistan go to prove the unconquerable spirit of these freedom—loving communities inhabiting the vast area of the mountainous country in the heart of Asia.

Whatever were British reasons for invading Afghanistan, they grossly misunderstood a number of vital factors. They believed that the Afghan people were ripe for revolt against their ruler and would welcome a deliverer with open arms. They thought this was especially true of the Ghilzais and other refractory tribes. They found that, quite to the contrary, all the tribes fought the intruders with great bravery, primarily, because of their loyalty to their king and country. Further, the British did not take into consideration the free spirit and the virile patriotism of the Afghans, which had always made them fight back invaders. The British had soon to learn at a great cost that this was a different country and different kind of war. They tried in vain to cow the civilian population with deeds of horrible brutality. On the other hand one good thing that came from these wars was a reinforced sense of Afghan unity. Most of the tribes, even the

fractious ones, rallied behind their rulers to repel the alien invaders.

As soon as the Afghans realized what had happened and that their country was practically annexed to the British Indian Empire, they rose everywhere in spontaneous revolt. In every hamlet and village, throughout the country, they took up what arms they could find, ax, dagger, matchlock, etc., and set out to fight the common enemy. Nothing like this universal uprising of all sections of people, all animated by one thought, had ever been seen before in the annals of any nation on the face of the globe. For the first time the British occupation forces, disciplined and directed by experienced generals who had marched triumphantly in Asia and Africa, had to face a whole population inspired by religion and patriotism. It was with a chill that the British realized that they were at grips with a foe, though incompetent in a set-battle, neither gives nor seeks mercy. Moreover the foe lay everywhere and they must fight day and night not with soldiers but with all sections of the people. The British in the beginning were very slow to measure the forces of national upheaval. They could not

understand a people who perferred misgovernment of their own making to rational rule imposed from without.

In 1878, the British once again, nervous over Russian advances in Central Asia, committed the same mistake and thereby helped all sections of the Afghans to unite against their common foe. As a result of this national upheaval, British forces once more suffered heavy losses and bogged down in such a political morass that they who had invaded Afghanistan to overthrow an allegedly pro-Russian Amir, were ultimately forced to hand the country over to Abdur Rahman Khan, who had spent eleven years in Samarkand and Tashkand and was regarded as a pro-Russian claimant to the Afghan throne.

And finally, the last contest, the Third Anglo-Afghan war (in 1919), proved conclusively that the vast development of British fighting methods during those four years of World War I did not enable her to subdue the Afghans.

There is a peculiar custom among the Afghans which goes by the name of *Tiga-ekhodil* (laying stone), when mutual jealousies are temporarily allowed to remain in abeyance, and

the tribes all flock to fight under one standard in the interest of the country and common faith, and this really has been the chief factor of Afghan victory in all of their wars against foreigners.

Patriotism.—The Afghans are extremely patriotic and are averse to migration. Abroad they are usually homesick and cannot easily adapt themselves to their new surroundings. Most of them even do not want to settle down in another part of their own country, however bright the prospects may be. This fact is evinced at the time of the death of an Afghan in a foreign land or in another part of his own motherland. When finding his end approaching, he requests his relatives or friends to take his body to his native village to be interred in his family graveyard. If the body cannot be taken as a whole, it is often dismembered and packed in a coffin. Even on the battlefield, Afghans try, at the risk of their own lives, to remove the dead bodies of their relatives or friends and to take them to their village cemetery. Paradoxically, though the Afghan loves his country ardently, he always likes to grumble about it, and the more faults he can find the better he

feels. But at the same time he would not like to hear adverse criticism of his country or countrymen from others, and would certainly be offended if a foreigner were to agree with him.

Drawn together by their loyalty to their chief and to their soil, the Afghans have always kept their patriotic spirit alive. His nativeland is ever dear to an Afghan, and there is hardly any nook in the mountains or a corner of his own village that does not bring remembrances of past glory or around which ancient myths and legends are not woven.

This spirit of national pride of the Afghans is very strong. An Iranian writer illustrates this nationalism of the Afghans in these words: "If you ask even a poor Afghan who is dressed in rags and is your paid servant who he is, he will answer with pride that he is an Afghan. From his expression and tone of voice you can see that he is proud of being an Afghan. The firmness of his voice and his dominating gestures make you feel that he is the master and you are his servant."

Pukhtunwali.—The way of life of an Afghan is controlled to a large extent by an

unwritten code called Pukhtunwali. He is bound by honour to respect it and to abide by it, otherwise he will bring disgrace to himself and to his family members, and he is also likely to be banished or excommunicated. This code requires an Afghan to defend his motherland, to grant asylum (ninawati) to fugitives irrespective of their creed or caste, to offer hospitality even to his deadly enemy, and to wipe out insult with insult. Ninawati or nang means seeking the help of an influential man at the time of difficulty, which according to the Afghan code, must be granted. A man who finds his life, property or honour in danger or has a favour to ask, goes ninawati to the house or tent of an influential chief on whom he depends, and refuses to sit on his carpet, or partake his food or avail himself of the chief's hospitality until the boon is granted or the promise is solemnly made. The honour of the party thus solicited will incur a stain if he does not grant the favour asked of him. So far is this custom carried into practice, that a man overmatched by his enemy, will enter the house of another and entreat him to save his life and take up his

quarrel, a request with which the other is obliged to comply without murmuring.

A still stronger appeal is made when a woman in distress sends her veil or *chadar* (scarf) to an Afghan, calling upon him as her brother and imploring his assistance for herself or her family members. From this custom arises the obligation of protecting and defending a culprit, a murderer or a rebel even against the government, irrespective of his crime. According to the Code, those who seek shelter under the roof of an Afghan are to be defended at all cost. Most of the tribal feuds and clashes with the Government find their source in this practice.

It is related that Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (998—1030 A.D.) once went hunting. He spotted a handsome deer some distance off. It pleased his fancy to pursue. He hit the deer with an arrow. The wounded animal ran for its dear life, being hotly pursued by the Sultan, who was riding a swift-footed horse. The deer, already exhausted from loss of blood, took shelter in an Afghan tent (Ghizhdi as it is called). The Sultan was extremely delighted to see the animal entering the tent. He came

forward with the intention of entering it and laying his hand on the poor animal. But his surprise knew no bounds when he found the owner of the flock, a mere shepherd in tattered clothes, standing at the doorway and barring his entrance. The Sultan, enraged at this unusual audacity on the part of the nomad, demanded sharply, "Who are you and what do you mean by this rash action? Get out of my way or you are no more." "I'm sorry," said the shepherd calmly, "I cannot let you in. The wounded animal has approached me seeking help and I cannot bear to have it suffer. It is now under my roof and our national code requires that it must be defended." "But don't you know," said the infuriated Sultan in a harsh tone, "I am Mahmud, the sultan of the country and my orders must be obeyed." "Whosoever you may be," replied the shepherd cooly, "our national custom is to be honoured. You can have one of my best sheep instead, but I cannot see any harm befalling the animal so long as it is in my tent. If you are indeed the Sultan of the country, it behooves you all the more to honour our national custom." The Sultan, finding himself baffled by this bold reply, went on his way.

It is related that once a gang of robbers attacked a village. The villagers, both men and women, went out to defend their hearth and home, with the exception of an old woman, who could not take part in the conflict due to her advanced age. Standing at the doorway of her cottage, she was watching the scene impatiently, while two of her sons were taking active part in the fighting. After a long and contested battle, the robbers were defeated and forced to take to their heels. But two of them, finding their way barred, took shelter in the house of the old woman. They were hotly pursued by the villagers. On reaching the old woman's house, they were surprised to see her raising her hands and trying to stop the pursuers from entering the house. One of the villagers, approaching her, said, "Mother, what are you doing? Get out of our way. Don't you know that these two men are responsible for the death of your two sons?" The woman replied proudly, "That may be so, but they have come ninawati to my house, and I cannot see anyone laying his hands on them so long as they are under my roof."

Meranah (*chivalry*) *and Turah* (*bravery*).—Another peculiar custom, resembling ninawati is known by the name of meranah (gallantry). An Afghan is bound by honour to help those who need his help. If someone finds his life or honour in danger and calls for help, every Afghan hearing his appeal is bound to come to his assistance even at the risk of his own life. Such a person is entitled to be a called a merah—a gallant warrior.

Turah means sword as well as bravery. Every Afghan is expected to be *turyaleh* (brave), otherwise he is looked down upon and is called *beghayrat*—dishonourable. A beloved says in respect of her coward lover ; "My sweetheart failed to show *turah*, I repent the romance I had with him last night." Another says: "Better come home stained with blood, rather than safe and sound as a coward."

Hospitality.—The Afghans are considered to be one of the most hospitable peoples in the world. An Afghan, however poor, feels delighted and honoured to receive a guest. All persons, irrespective of rank, religion or nationality, are entitled to profit by this

practice. It is the greatest insult to an Afghan to carry off his guest; but his indignation is never directed against the guest who quits him but against the person who invites him away.

In Afghanistan a visitor is welcomed everywhere with a hearty spontaneous smile and a greeting of *sitarai mushe, khiraghlay* (may you not feel tired and you are most welcome). He is invited into the house and offered the best room, the best fruit and the best food that his host can afford, and when leaving, will be seen off with a smile and a *baman-e-Khudda* (God be with you).

At dinner an Afghan host will request his guest repeatedly to take more and more and to do full justice to all the dishes offered. Good manners and Afghan etiquette require, that the guest, however full he may be, complies with the request and shows his appreciation of the dishes. On such occasions frugality has no meaning to an Afghan. He kills his best sheep or fowls for the feast and cooks food not for his guest alone, but for a grand party to which most of the neighbours and the elders of the village are invited. He is delighted to see his guests praising the variety of his dishes and his lavishness.

To stop at an orchard in a countryside is to be given a *carte blanche*—enter, most welcome you are to eat as much as you can and carry away as much as you desire, and dare you offer a cent in return.

Ernest Fox, author of "Travels in Afghanistan" writes about Afghan hospitality: "I want to emphasize that nowhere in the world where I have gone, among a people so different from my own, have I met those whom I esteem more highly than the Afghans, or those whom I would rather work again. Their honour is their bond; their hospitality is full and generous, and their tolerance is more honest than our own."

One of the chief drawbacks of the Afghan is his vindictive nature. He does not believe in forgetting and forgiving, rather he is in favour of a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, and a blood for a blood. Tribal feuds seldom cease. Death in shoes or in bed is not considered honourable. Sometimes a little dispute might become hot, daggers drawn, blood spilt, and lives lost. An Afghan cherishes vengeance until he has power or opportunity to wreak it. If the father of the family died without such gratification, he would

bequeath this duty to his children, for blood becomes a legacy, and feud is inherited as the family's most sacred obligation and incumbent duty.

Afghan Family System.—Another important feature of Afghan life is the joint-family system. In a traditional Afghan household the married sons live together with their families under the parental roof and are subject to parental authority. The patriarch controls the finances of the group, giving the sons allowances out of their earnings ; the matriarch is the autocrat of the home to whom the daughters-in-law and grand-children are subject. It can be seen that this system has advantages as well as drawbacks. Of the former may be mentioned economic security to all members of the family. An Afghan has always a home to look forward and even in his old age he is never completely destitute. It on the other hand encourages dependence and sloth among the irresponsible and lack of initiative in the majority.

Besides, the head of the family is often an old-fashioned individual who draws his inspiration from ancient authorities. He is stout defender of ancient customs and usages, and

views with distress the ways of the modern world and is always on the look out for weeding out western influence from the family. He insists that the younger members of the household should wear the clothes as he had done when he was young, and should dress his hair in the traditional manner. The head of the family is often a pillar of orthodoxy, suspicious of the activities of the younger members of the family. Almost always he is a miser.

The youngmen, on the other hand, get education on modern lines, read magazines, see pictures, visit progressive cities and countries, and feel amorous of the freedom of the younger generations in foreign lands. They naturally become advocates of change and reforms in their own house. They resent the stingy habits of the head of the family and think it a sin to lock up money in a box, or hoard it under ground when the warm blood of the youth cares for the pleasures of the world. This antagonism between the young and the old in the joint families often results in frictions and open rebellion of the young against the rigid authority of the head of the family.

As regard property, a sort of commune prevails in the joint family. Every member of the household, whatever his calling or occupation, is required to hand over his income to the head of the family, which goes into the common pool. Each member is entitled to receive food and clothing and what pocket-money the head of the family is pleased to give him. Other expenses connected with health, education and marriages, etc., are met from the common fund.

The women of the house, especially the daughters-in-law live under the tyranny of the mother-in-law (khushoo). This person is the terror of all the young ladies, and her genius for ill-treatment has become proverbial. Any slackness or oversight in the matter of domestic affairs is pointed out as a reflection on her daughter-in-law's breeding. Many an Afghan girl has wept at the prospect of marriage, not because she objects to her little-known bridegroom, but for fear of what her mother-in-law might have in store for her.

The joint-family system, which has been a powerful social institution and whose pressure

on the individual has been great, is now breaking down under the impact of modern knowledge. The fluid conditions of modern urban life have made inroads upon it ; once a couple have broken away or moved to a distant town, they rarely go back to the original family seat.

The position of the wife in an Afghan society demands special notice. Afghan tradition regards marriage as a sacrament. It was originally life-long and no separation was thought of until only recently. Though divorce and remarriage are legal and permissible, neither is widely practised. Afghan wives are extremely sincere and faithful to their husbands and share their husbands' adversity gladly, never thinking of separation. The word *zantalaq* (a man who has divorced his wife) is the greatest insult to an Afghan. Although cases of polygamy are not wanting, monogamy is generally practised, especially in the enlightened cricles. Besides polygamy is dying out by sheer force of economic pressure. The socially recognized exception is when the first wife has no children.

In an Afghan society woman still occupies

a subordinate position, but these social customs are being undermined by a number of forces. Her position in the old society was to attend to her husband, to respect him, and to look after his needs. From this attitude sprang such customs as the wife's walking behind her husband in public and never eating with her husband or his friends. In spite of this, she held a respectable position as the head of the domestic establishment. As a mother she was adored by her children ; as a wife she was often venerated by her husband; as a sister she was dearly loved. Her childhood was often happy ; during married life she was important as wife and mother.

The wife in the Afghan society of today is really the mistress of the household, usually wielding great influence over her husband and the younger members of the family. Women are no longer considered inferior. Husband and wife discuss their family matters in an atmosphere of extreme friendliness and arrive at mutual decisions. The husband assumes dominance in certain spheres, usually in finances and business arrangements, while the wife looks after the children and other household affairs. The fact

that the family atmosphere is healthy is evidenced by the lowest divorce-rate in the world.

In former days marriage was looked upon as a kind of sale in which, after the consent of the parties had been given, the husband made to the wife's father a payment of money called *Walvar* or *Shirbaha*. Village marriages have kept this ancient form to some extent; but dowry (*mahar*) is assigned to the wife and is considered as an indemnity for the sacrifice of her person.

The Afghan family circle is usually a genial one. All the members of the house sit around a big sheet of cloth (called *dastarkhan*) spread on the floor for a plain but nourishing meal. In winter the whole family gathers round the *sandali* (a kind of stove covered with a big quilt) and chat, often children listening to their mother or grandmother, who usually is an expert story-teller. If a family can afford it, the top of the *sandali* is packed with dried fruits of various kinds to which everyone has equal access.

Betrothals and Marriages.—On account of conservatism and strict segregation of the sexes, marriages among Afghans are usually arranged by parents. The prospective bride and

bridegroom have no part in the negotiations except in the educated sections of society. Before their marriage the young couple seldom meet each other except possibly incidently. It is considered highly improper for a young man or woman to take the initiative in the matter of his or her marriage. A well-bred boy is expected to abide by the decisions of his parents in the matter of his marriage. Educated young men and women are beginning to show an independent spirit in connection with their marriages. Even among this class those who go against the wishes of their parents are few. The young couple's confirmation is but formal, and if they have complaints, they are usually coaxed or bullied into submission, and it is rare that a marriage once fixed by the parents breaks up.

Infant and child marriage is uncommon. The usual age of marriage for males is 20 to 25 and for females 18 to 22 years. Overtures may commence by a visit from the mother or aunt of the boy to the house of the girl's parents. The father of the girl is usually a proud person, difficult to approach. There are also professional matchmakers, mostly widows, who have easy access to womenfolk. They give wide publicity

regarding the beauty and virtues of the girl. If the agreement is arrived at, the respective fathers of the bride and the bridegroom meet to discuss the final terms of the marriage. The amount of *mahar* bride-wealth is settled. A day for betrothal is then fixed when *sherbet* and sweets are distributed to the guests and formal acceptance of engagement is announced. This ceremony is called *Shirinikhori* or *Namzadi* (sweet-taking or naming). The betrothal ceremony is more or less a solemnization of the forthcoming marriage contract. In certain cases a written contract is drawn up, in others a promise by word of mouth is considered sufficient. Once the betrothal is performed, the parties are expected to stick to the contract, but under extraordinary circumstances it can be broken.

Usually after two or three months, the date of the marriage is fixed. The marriage ceremony takes place in the house of the bride. The details differ according to localities, but the essentials are the same. The most important function in the marriage ceremony is *Aainamassaf*—the meeting at the mirror. The bride and the bridegroom sit side by side, both properly dressed and gaily decorated, the bride having a

thin veil over her face. It is the occasion most appropriate for the bridegroom to meet his life-mate for the first time. Good manners require that even on this occasion the couple should not cast direct glances at each other, nor are they to steal a glance, but rather they should see each other's faces reflected in a mirror placed before them.

The girls of the boy's family, who are in their best attire, make a happy circle around the bride and the bridegroom seated together on a raised platform. The couple first of all read a verse from the Holy Quran. Then the bridegroom offers some sweets to the bride. Two shy white hands with henna-red palms rise slowly to receive the offer. Then the womenfolk with their *daira* (a round instrument of music resembling a tambourine) begin to sing and dance and move in a circle around the couple. The song begins thus:

O the groom is tall as a pine
And the bride is a bunch of roses,
On her head is a golden shawl,
On her chin is a beauty spot.

The *nikah* (wedding) ceremony is conducted late at night by the *Imam* of the mosque, who

recites the marriage service in the presence of elders and respected people. The names of the bride and bridegroom are repeated aloud, witnesses are produced and the permission of the bride and bridegroom obtained. Then the *Imam* reads a verse from the Quran and prays for the long life and happiness of the couple and declares them husband and wife. The bride is then taken to the bridegroom's house in procession. On the way back, not only is there the sound of gunfire and rockets, but bands of musicians lead the way, playing their instruments and beating their drums as loudly as they can. On entering the house, the bridegroom, like the Aryans of olden days, leads his life-mate straight to the family hearth (*naghare*). She tastes of the sweet dish prepared for the occasion and thus becomes a *bona fide* member of her husband's family. More feasting and celebration ensue until late at night or even until dawn. Then finally all the womenfolk depart and the couple make each other's acquaintance for the first time.

It is necessary to distinguish between the customs of the nomads, of the villagers and of the town dwellers. The whole body of ceremonies is called *Urusi* in Persian and *Wadeh* in

Pashto, and the spouses are *damad* or *zoom* (bridegroom) and *aross* or *naway* (bride). On the third day of marriage another feast is followed called *Takht-jami*, which celebrates the treaty of friendship between the members of the two families.

The adorning of the bride, the night in which her hands and feet are dyed with henna and her face made up, gives occasion for another day of feasting. The bride is led in a procession and ceremoniously placed on a throne; relatives and friends gather round her and offer her presents. This is called *runomai*—face-showing.

During these ceremonies the bride and the bridegroom are believed to be exposed to the attacks of the jinns and the danger of the evil eye. Various rites play a part to keep the couple immune from their injuries.

Birth and Funeral Ceremonies.—The birth of a son is a joyful occasion in an Afghan family, while that of a girl is not so well received. In Afghanistan, when a male baby is born, there is great rejoicing in the village. As soon as the joyful news is spread abroad, every person in the

village and even men from a long distance away seize their guns and rush to the house. On reaching there, they fire their guns into the air several times, while bands of musicians play their instruments and beat their drums, making a terrific noise.

Immediately after the child is born, it is considered a good thing to repeat the words of the call of prayer (*azan*) into the child's ears. A name is usually given to a child on the seventh day. The name varies in different parts of the country, for alongside of the specially Islamic ones that are of Arabic derivation, old local and national names are now largely used. The name of a child is completed by the addition at the end of that of his father or family. It may also be a nickname. Daughters generally receive the names of the family of the Prophet, or these may be the names of attributes or of flowers, such as Nasreen, Binafshah, Yasimeen, Sosun, Sharifa, Latifa, Zarghona, Mastura, etc.

An Afghan baby for the first few months of its birth is wrapped up in a few pieces of cloth from neck to toe. It looks like a bundle of linen and it is unable to move its hands and feet

freely. A thick silken or cotton cord is wound round and round its body, making the movement of its limbs next to impossible. As a family can only be maintained in the male line, great importance is attached to the birth of a boy. Abundance of sons is constantly prayed for. Lack of male issue is looked upon as a bad omen. This, too, seems to be the legacy of the past, when anarchy was rampant and every family needed strong hands to protect itself from the onslaught of its avaricious neighbours. Naturally, in such strifes, a boy could play a stronger role than a girl. No desire for the birth of a girl is ever expressed and seldom would an Afghan like to be congratulated on the birth of his daughter or even on the occasion of her marriage. This is why the parents devote more attention to the education and upbringing of their sons rather than to that of their girls, who are generally considered as the potential property of others. But in enlightened circles changes are creeping in. In these families many young people now choose their life-mates themselves and parents look upon their daughters with affection and do not regard them as being inferior in any way.

On the seventh day after the birth of a male

child, two sheep or goats are sacrificed and their flesh is given to the poor. At the same time alms are distributed in the form of a quantity of silver or gold equal to the weight of the infant's hair, which is customarily removed. This ceremony as a whole has kept its old name of *sarkali*—head-shaving.

The young child belongs entirely to its mother; if she is able she usually feeds it from her own milk for about two years. In all classes of society, the child is the object of much love and tender care, and often has a pet name. The mother's chief anxiety at this stage is to protect her child from the evil eye or from a jinn. That is why many well-to-do families keep their children dirty or ill-clad at an early age. A laudatory phrase, which boasts imprudently of the child's good health or beauty, is considered most dangerous and, as soon as it is uttered, the evil effect of it must be conjured away by a propitiatory gesture or expression. Another important ceremony connected with a male child is the circumcision (*sunati*, as it is called). On this occasion, too, all male and female relatives are invited and served a sumptuous feast.

When a death occurs, relatives and friends go to the house of mourning to express their sympathies. So long as the corpse is lying in the room or in the courtyard, the customary lamentations called *vier* go on. The women group themselves round the corpse and weep in unison, while a few read the Quran. The close relatives of the deceased, such as the sisters, slap their faces or tear their hair. These gestures continue with increasing vehemence for a few hours until they finally desist from exhaustion. By this time their faces have become swollen from repeated slappings, their eyes are blood-shot, and their hair hangs in wild locks.

The dead body is then washed and dressed in a winding sheet of cotton, and placed on a bed and covered with clean sheets. The coffins of youth are often covered with flowers and fancy cloth. The corpse is carried to the burial ground. The relatives and friends follow, but women take no important part in the funeral procession. The *Jinaza* prayer is held at a nearby mosque or at the graveyard, and the body is then lowered into the grave, which is always dug north and south and is a chamber fashioned

so as to permit the body to lie on the right side, with face pointing to Mecca. A verse of the Quran is recited and prayers are offered to the departed soul. After the funeral rites are completed, alms are distributed among the poor, who usually gather round the grave in large numbers.

The *Fatehakhani* (mourning ceremonies) customarily continue from one to three days. The Afghan Government, with a view to curtailing these expenses, has called upon the people to hold mourning ceremony in a public mosque from morning to 12 a. m. only, at which time friends and relatives come to pray for the departed soul and offer their condolence to the bereaved.

Respect for Elders.—In Afghan society great respect is shown to the greybeards (*speenghiri*) and elders of the family. The King, who is looked upon as the Head or Father of the nation, is held in great reverence. He is the spiritual leader as well as the temporal ruler of his people. Everyone, from high to low, feels delighted and greatly honoured and blessed to meet the King and talk with him for a few

minutes. A father, in his old age, when infirmity prevents him from being of any use to the family, is always respected by his sons and daughters and taken very good care of. His children and even grandchildren, as a rule, do everything in their power to see that the old man complains of nothing and that his needs are met promptly. The curses of an old father or mother are considered deadly and might lead their children to hell in the next world. The obedience that the Afghans show towards their leaders and greyheaded sires does not have its equal in the most advanced countries of the world.

Religious Ceremonies.—The population of Afghanistan is predominantly Moslem, a vast majority of them being Sunnis. They, especially the villagers, are very punctual in their prayers five times a day, and are regular in observing fast during the month of Ramzan. The pilgrimage of the *Haj* is also very common among the well-to-do classes. Alms-giving and *Zakat* (two and a half per cent. of the net income) are also common among the orthodox. The celebration of *Eids* occupies a prominent place in Afghan life. The two principal Eid-feasts are the

anniversary of the pilgrimage, and that of the breaking of the fast. The Little Eid, or *Eidul Fitr* is celeberated on the first day of *Shawal*, just after the conclusion of the month of Ramzan. At *Eidul-Duha* or Bigger Eid each family offers, in accordance with the rituals, a camel, a cow, a sheep or a goat, in which the poor have a share. On both occasions those who have the means put on new clothes in order to take part in a solemn prayer with *Khutba* (public sermon). Then they exchange presents and congratulations. While greeting a man on the occasion of Little Eid, people say to one another "May God accept your fastings and prayers ;" while on the second occasion they say, "May you become a *haji* and a *ghazi*." The third Eid is on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday. *Eid-e-milad-i-Nabi*, which is widely celebrated.

Love Affairs.—An Afghan, though rough and harsh in general appearance, is as much human and humane as a member of any other civilised nation. He is not devoid of love, but he tries to conceal it in his bosom, for Afghan etiquette requires that he should not speak his

mind to others in such matters, even to his own kith and kin. An Afghan girl is shyer than a boy in the expression of her attachment to any one. Marriages, even in educated classes, are generally arranged by parents. But sometimes it so happens that some bolder spirits take the matter in their own hands. A girl for instance might just call to a man whom she fancies. It would be regarded highly bold on the part of the fair sex, but now she has a right to do so. In such a case the man is bound by honour to accept the offer, whether he likes it or not. The man likewise has the same right. He is at liberty to go to the house, fort, or encampment of his lady-love, and standing in front of her residence, fire his gun in the air, thereby declaring his attachment for the girl. Then he approaches directly or through the elders of the village the father or the guardian of the girl, entreating him to forgive him for his audacity, and imploring the hand of the girl in marriage. The right ends there, and the girl or her parents have the right to turn down the proposal, though refusal of such requests may lead to trouble or tribal feuds.

Love songs are not uncommon in Afghan

literature. These are often very simple an direct. Here is one of them:

O the flowers are lined in thy hair,
And thy eyes, O my beloved,
Are like the flowers of narcissus.
O my priceless rare treasure,
O my life, O my soul,
O my little mountain poppy,
Thy art my morning star,
Thy laughter is the water-fall:
Thy whispers the evening breeze.
O my branch of apple-blossom,
Who spilt moonlight in thine eyes?
O my little butterfly,
Come and rest in my affectionate heart.

The standard of morality in an Afghan society is fairly high. Drinking wine, gambling and prostitution are looked down upon. The Afghan is very jealous of the honour of his womenfolk, which he is to defend at the cost of his life. He does not even like a stranger to praise the beauty or any other attribute of his wife or daughter. Unmarried men and women are very few in Afghanistan and celibacy is not encouraged. To be childless is almost a crime against family and society.

Modernized Afghan girls and boys are experiencing a new freedom in living, new ways of dressing, and new customs in love and marriage.

Jirgah.—A very ancient and useful Afghan institution is the *Jirgah*, a tribal assembly. In olden days, whenever the central government ceased to function, it was the *Jirga* that could maintain peace and order. It had to perform the three-fold duties of police, magistracy and justice. In cases of national emergency, it could mobilize a force to defend the village.

The *Jirgah* was the authority for settling disputes and dispensing justice. Cases of breach of contracts, disputes about boundaries, distribution of water, claims to lands and pastures and infringement of customs, grant or inheritance were all within the jurisdiction of the *Jirgah.* Even criminal cases were settled in this important national assembly.

The *Jirgah*, especially in days of anarchy and chaos, was a permanent institution ; its meetings were held only when the need arose. The members were elected by the whole body of the villagers, mostly from among the elderly persons

of experience, knowledge and character. There were no pleaders and no records were kept.

The *Jirgah* has still not lost its force. Even the Afghan Government convenes it in times of national emergency. It is then given the name of *Loya Jirgah*, grand assembly. The last of this kind was held in September 1964, to discuss and approve the draft Constitution.

New Year's Celebrations.—New Year is a happy occasion in all countries of the world. In Afganistan it falls on the 21st of March, which is the beginning of spring. It is definitely the beginning of a new life in the country. The sudden change in weather, the blowing of invigorating breezes, and the singing of birds all bear witness that a new leaf is turned over in the country's life-book and that winter is over.

New Year's Eve is celebrated throughout Afghanistan with much rejoicing. Housewives are usually busy preparing and cooking special dishes and cookies (called *kulcha-e-nawrozi*). There are several legends connected with this day. One of them is that an old woman, Ajozak, as they call her, comes to this world once a year. As soon as she lands somewhere in a valley, she

starts swinging in a gorge, which is encircled by high mountains. If she falls down into a stream below, it is presumed that the year will be wet and rainy, otherwise they expect a dry season and shortage of food.

Independence Day Celebrations.—The last week of August is a happy occasion throughout Afhganistan. It is the week to celebrate *Jeshan*, Independence Day and to commemorate the brilliant victory at Thal, which the Afghans, under the leadership of the Late King, Mohammed Nadir Shah (then Commander-in-Chief of Afghan forces), had over the British.

Most countries have an Independence Day. Afghanistan has an Independence Week, when all official business comes to a halt for at least the first three days. Cities and citizens don colourful garb and there is much dancing, sports, fireworks and lights. In Kabul the focal point of interest is the Ghazi Stadium in Chaman-e-Huzuri, which is packed from early morning to late in the evening with cheering crowds. Near the Stadium there is an exhibition of Afghan arts and crafts and industry. In the wide open grounds there are merry-go-rounds,

travelling circuses, fortune-tellers, hawkers of toys and balloons, and all other paraphernalia which go to make a fiesta festive.

Picnics.—Afghans are a sociable people, very fond of picnics and feasts, in which music plays an important role. Every Friday (which is a public holiday in Afghanistan), provided the weather permits, people of all ranks, men, women and children, carrying food with them, go out to a neighbouring garden, and stay there until late in the evening. The day is spent in merry-making, singing, dancing and cooking various kinds of delicious food. Children go up the hills, while the elders recline against huge pillows in the shade of a willow tree or under a gigantic *panjachinar*. Youngsters are busy cooking food, and beautiful samovars are seen boiling water for tea. The Afghans, indeed, are very fond of drinking tea, quaffing several cups, one after the other, within a few minutes.

During such special gatherings, sometimes a literary discussion takes place. Everyone tries to support his statement or theory with a line from some well-known poet or a quotation from a famous writer.

Burfi.—A strange custom practised in and around Kabul goes by the name of *Burfi* (from *burf*, meaning snow). On the occasion of the first fall of snow, friends address congratulatory letters to one another containing a short Persian couplet, running thus :

Snow comes continuously from above
Snow is mine while Burfi is yours.

Everybody on such occasions is on his guard lest he may be taken unaware. He takes great precautions and instructs his servants and family members not to receive a letter from anyone before first ascertaining its contents. Everyone tries to catch hold of the deliverer of such letters. If he is caught while delivering the letter, he gets a good thrashing and is then turned over to his master with face blackened. This means that the sender of letter has lost the game, and according to the custom must pay the penalty, which is to arrange a grand feast in honour of the winner and his friends. If, on the other hand, the letter is received by the addressee himself or any member of his family, and the deliverer escapes unscathed, the addressee is to pay a similar penalty.

Methods of Greetings.—Afghans are very particular about the manner of greeting each other, though this depends largely upon the social status of the persons meeting. Hand-shaking, embracing and kissing faces and beards are considered to be an essential part of Afghan social life. When meeting an elderly person, the Afghan folds his hands on his own chest, bows a little, and kisses the old man's hands. The same method is used by young men greeting their parents and teachers.

Among educated classes, greeting after European fashion and shaking hands are becoming common. It is safe not to extend a hand to an Afghan lady. A stranger is not allowed to speak to a lady with whom he is not well acquainted. Similarly, it is considered immodest on the part of a woman to approach or to speak to a stranger on any matter whatsoever. It will be considered an insolence on the part of stranger to help a lady in or out of a vehicle. An orthodox lady, offered a seat in a bus by a stranger, may frown upon him. It is considered immodest on the part of a lady to walk ahead of a man, if he is her husband or elder brother.

According to the Afghan code of morals a woman should be shy, bashful, timid and modest and should not laugh or speak loudly. It is an offence against good manners to address an Afghan lady by her name, nor may a woman address a man by his. The usual way of addressing an Afghan lady is *khanum* or *merman.* Regarding her conduct in public a poet says :

Du lab pur ze khandah, du rukh pur ze sharm.
Ba raftar neko, ba guftar garm.

Translation : Lips full of smiles, countenance full of modesty, conduct virtuous, conversation lively.

When thanking someone, the usual greeting is *tashakur* (thank you) or *zindabashi* (may you live long). The Afghan is very fond of using the phrase *inshahullah* (God willing) in his conversation. When making a mistake, he does not often hold himself answerable for it, but rather blames his bad luck (*kismat-e-bad*).

If someone is going abroad, friends and relatives go to see him off and say, *safar bakhair* (bon voyage). If someone has left for a foreign country, they go to his house, and, on meeting the members of his family, say *jayesh sabz,*

meaning that his place should remain green for ever. If anyone falls ill, friends and relatives go to his house to ask about his health and, on meeting him, say *shifabashad* (may you recover soon). If anyone meets a mishap, the general expression is *nasseb dushmanan* (may this be the lot of your enemy). If a talk is going on about somebody and he appears all of a sudden, they say *umrash ziyad* (he is sure to have a long life). Meeting a traveller on the way, people greet him with *mandanabashi* or *sitra-e-mishay* (may you not feel tired).

When talking about someone who is dead, people say *khudda janatha naseebish kunad* (may God grant him heavens), or *khudda biyamurzadash*, (may God forgive him). If someone is gone abroad and his name is mentioned, the usual expression is *yadash bakhair* (may he live in peace and be remembered always).

Standard of Beauty in the Eye of an Afghan.—Eyes almond-shaped, big, black, and bright like those of a fawn, or like the narcissus in shape and colour ; face round, bright and fair like the full moon with dimpled cheeks and chin ; bosom well-developed and elevated like a pomegranate ; body soft, smooth, slim and

slender ; voice sweet and melodious ; gait like that of a swan, a partridge or a pigeon ; neck long and slender like that of a goblet; teeth short, white and fine like pearls ; nose high, straight and well-proportioned; complexion rosy; waist slender ; mouth small ; lips ruby in colour ; eyes restless like mercury ; eyebrows arched like a bow or a new moon ; eyelashes sharp and flickering; and stature tall like a cypress tree—these are some of the attributes that go to make an Afghan belle perfect and attractive. Khushal Khan Khattak, in one of his poems, describes the physical charms of the Afridi girls in these words :

Fair and rosy are the Ahmadkhel maidens,

Large eyes they have, long lashes and arched eyebrows,

Sugar lips, flowered cheeks, a face like the moon,

Tiny are the mouths like pouting rose buds.

Their skin soft and glossy like an egg shell,

In stature straight like the letter Alif and fair of colour.

Amusement and *Sports*—Hunting wild birds and animals is a very popular sport in Afghanistan. The old methods of catching birds and animals are still in vogue in some parts of the country. Men often go out with grey- hounds, hawks and falcons and course hares, foxes and deer.

The more prosperous hunters, equipped with shotguns, have live decoys, which they place on a convenient sheet of water, often a pond (called *nore*) made especially for this purpose. When the wild birds fly over, the Judai-ducks call and their wild brothers come down to be shot.

Farmers and villagers take hundreds of game birds by indigenous methods. They build trenches on the summits of some high mountains, where the air is so thin that the birds are unable to use their wings. The migratory birds that cross these mountains at special seasons of the year are forced to descend and try to walk the distance on foot. Thus they make an easy target from behind the trenches.

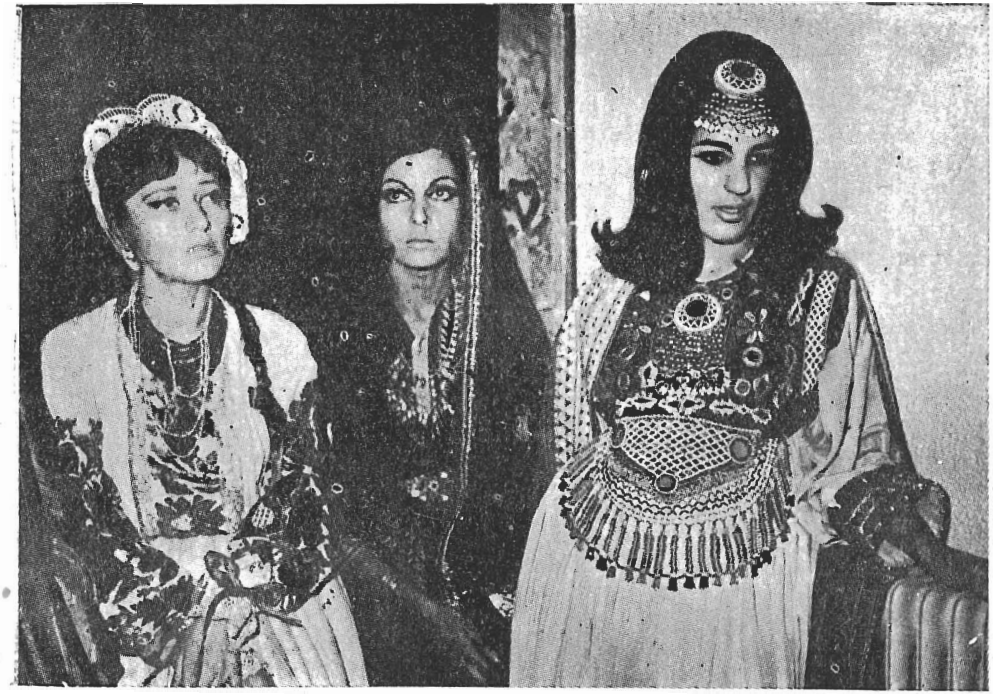
In the migratory season, hordes of birds approach the lofty Hindu Kush *en route* to the cooler

climates in which they prefer to spend their summers, and in winter they return to the warmer countries. Age-long trial and error has taught the birds that here, through the passes, the mountain wall can be crossed. These high and snow-capped mountains can be crossed on the wing if they are not in a malignant mood. But sometimes these mountains send down, from the still unmelted snows, a strong wind—the dreaded *Bad-e-Parwan*, which blows so hard and strikes so cold that neither bird nor man can make headway against it. When the *Bad-e-Parwan* is blowing, the Hindu Kush is truly higher than the ceiling of an eagle's flight, and the migratory birds' distress is their followers' opportunity. Defeated by the adverse blast, when the poor birds see the deceptive dummies apparently standing secure, they seek shelter and thus make easy targets for the waiting fowlers' guns.

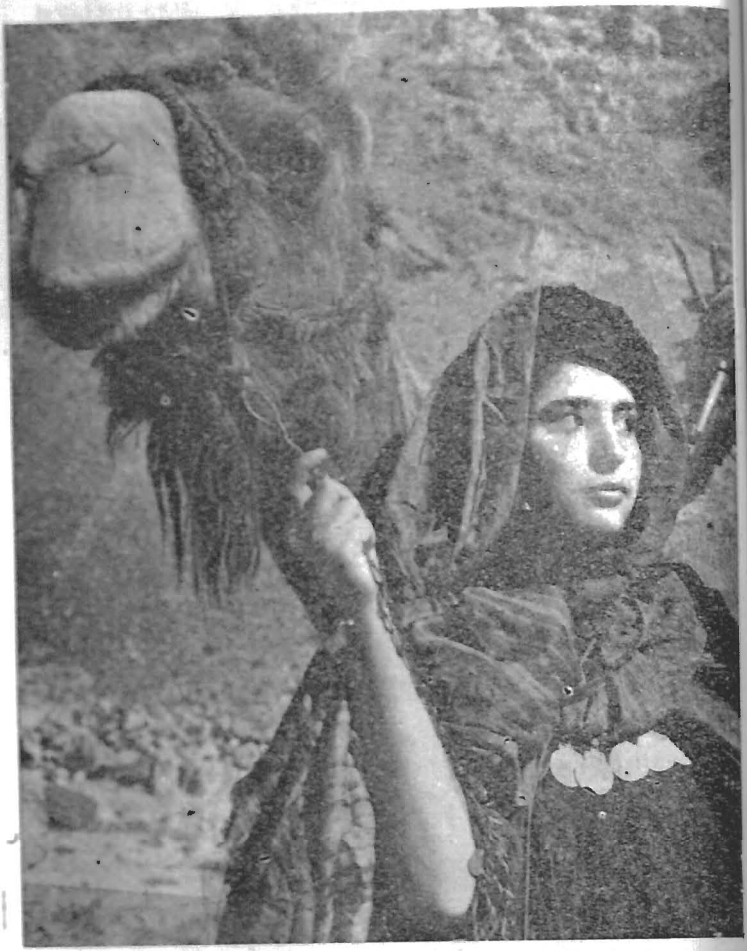
Another favourite method for catching water-fowls is to build across a small stream a pond which empties with a gentle current. The hunter builds across the pond a low hut of mud and twigs. The hut has a trap entrance

and no exit. A flight of weary and unsuspecting ducks are attracted to the pond by decoys and are made to feel so much at home that they spend the night there. As they sleep, the current of the water wafts them gently into the trap and they end up on the dinner table.

Attan.—One of the great delights of Afghans, both male and female is to dance the *Attan*. From ten to twenty men or women stand in a circle. One or two persons stand within the circle and sing or play on an instrument. When the beginning of the dance is announced by the drums (*dhols*), the dancers move and begin circling the group of drummers. Speed builds up gradually, and a stage comes when the rock and roll of the dancers and the sound of the instruments merge into one single fiery mass of sound and movement. The dancers go through a number of attitudes and figures, sometimes singing, sometimes shouting, while at other times clapping their hands and snapping their fingers. Every now and then they join hands and move slowly and then fast, forward and backward, sometimes making a full circle round one leg according to the music and all joining in chorus. The wave of excitement

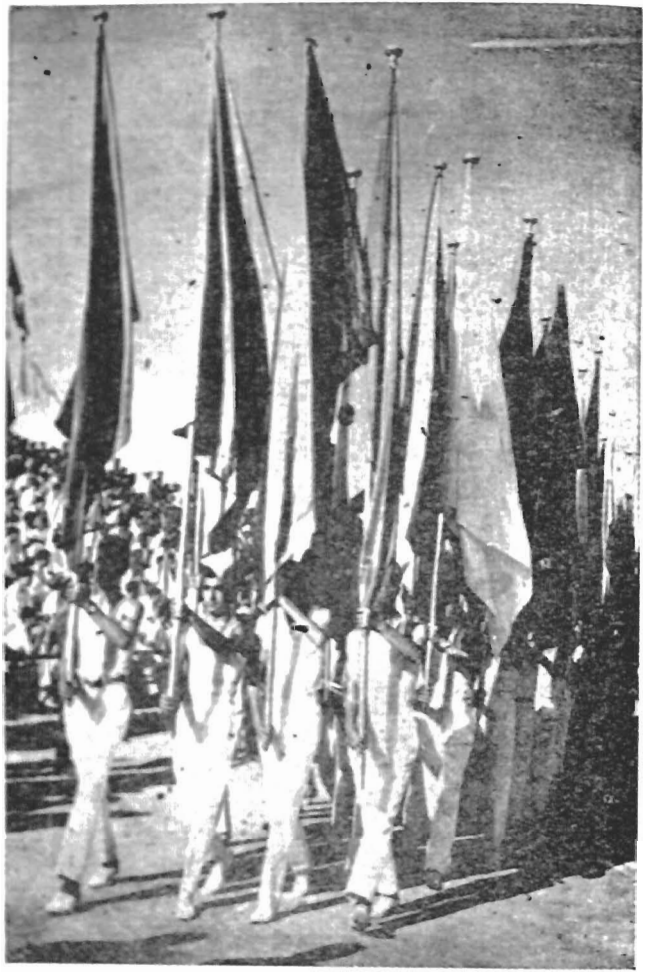


Afghan belles in national costume



A Kochi girl with Silver coins hanging round her neck

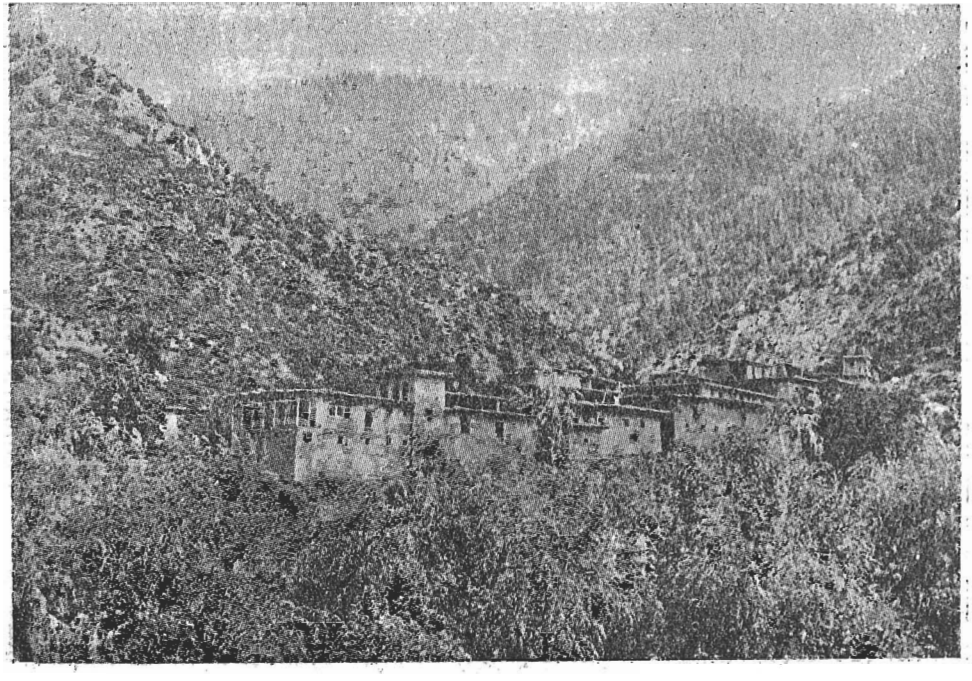
Kabul University : A class of faculty of Science



Independence Day—March past of University Students

Carpet-weaving is a great industry in the north of the Hindu Kush. It is chiefly carried on by women. The dyes used are prepared locally, which never fade, rather they improve by constant use

carrying goods from place to place.
having no fixed home. They
animals, which include camels,
donkeys and sheep



A typical Afghan village at the foot of the Salang Pass

Bu kashi :- A national game played like polo but with the carcass of a goat or calf

passes from the dancers to the drummers and also to the spectators, who more often than not join in the dancing. The dance gradually gathers speed and after reaching the climax it comes to a sudden stop with a thud.

The dancers often carry handkerchiefs in their hands. Quick spinning and whirling movements of the body are generally involved, though in some tribes the movement of the head is more prominent than the movement of the hands and the body.

Gursai.—Another game, which is generally played in the countryside, goes by the name of *Gursai.* A man takes his left foot in his right hand and hops about on one leg, endeavouring to upset his opponent who is advancing in the same way from the opposite direction.

Buzkashi (dragging of the goat) is another famous Afghan game though a very breath-taking one. The ground echoing to the thunder of flying hoofs and clamouring roar of excited spectators provides a thrilling background to what is surely the most exciting sport of the Afghans.

This is one of the national games of the people living in northern Afghanistan, where horses of good breeds are reared in quite a large number. This game gives the brilliant horsemen and their horses a chance to display their incredible skill, agility and bravery to the enthusiastic crowds.

The object of *Buzkashi* is to snatch the carcass of a calf from a shallow ditch surrounded by a circle, to carry it across an enormous field (often several miles long), round a given point in the far end, and to return and fling it back in the original circle.

Buzkashi is played by two teams (the number of players is not fixed but usually consists of 60 to 100 horsemen each side). The first thing to be done is to kill a goat, a calf or a sheep, and place the carcass in the middle of a circle. When this is done a signal is given, and all the riders, who have already formed a circle round the dead body, make a dash at the beheaded animal. The man who picks it after a hot struggle, flings it across the saddle in front of him and goes off at full gallop, while the others chase him closely until one of them catches up with him. While still at full gallop the two riders

struggle hard for the possession of the body. The man who gets it is in turn hotly pursued by others. When the carcass falls to the ground, as it does often, it is picked up as the riders gallop by. The horsemen, riding with one leg, throw themselves on one side of the horse so as to be able to reach the ground and pick it up. Great agility is needed on the part of the horses, which are required to bend their forelegs quickly to allow their riders to grab the calf. Once a rider has taken hold of the dead body, he immediately tries to escape the mob of milling steeds and to carry it away during which time he is being attacked by his opponents and defended by the members of his own team. During the fray the carcass changes hands may times. The team which manages successfully to return the body to the circle after touring the field is declared the winner. Should a competitor pull off an opponent's cloak, or strike him with a whip, a foul is scored.

The best area for this game is a large, soft, sandy field ; hard ground covered with stones and gravels makes a very dangerous course indeed.

Buzakashi is played during autumn and winter months, as it is too strenuous for the summer heat. The riders (*chapandaz*) have special uniforms and colours. They wear cotton caps, short cloaks, cotton trousers and long boots with high heels.

Concerning the horses, there are several strains suited to this sport, the most famous being *Katghani*. Nearly all the wealthy people of the northern provinces take a keen interest in this sport and own several special *Buzkashi* horses. These horses are carefully trained, well fed, and groomed regularly by *chapandaz*—the snatchers, who usually do not own their mounts. From March until October these animals rest and are trained within a fenced area. They are fed daily with barley, and twice a month with barley flour mixed with butter and eggs. A considerable amount of melon also goes into their diet. In winter they feed mostly upon sheep's fat.

Other important sports of the Afghans are : chess, *nard* (a game of dice), playing cards, horse-riding, wrestling, skating on ice, mountaineering and some of the European indoor and outdoor games, such as billiards, tennis, golf,

football, volleyball, basketball, skiing and cricket.

Dress and Food.—There has been a marked improvement in the dress of the Afghans in the last few years, and among the well-to-do and educated classes considerable changes in fashion have occurred. The dress of a villager still consists of a baggy *shalwar* (trousers) and a long pleated shirt in summer, with the addition of woollen vest or waistcoat and a country-made blanket worn round the shoulders in the winter time. Overcoats or home-made cloaks (*chapans*) are also commonly used in the cold season by those who can afford them. The turban (*dastar, mandeel or lungi*) is wound around a small cotton skull-cap.

The dress of a lady consists of a *shalwar*, a long shirt and a *chadar* (scarf). In the country-side Afghan women are very fond of wearing jewelry, such as finger rings, earings, necklaces and bangles.

Upper-class people and students wear European dress, and modern shoes are becoming very common. Afghan girl is experiencing a

new freedom in living and in new ways of dressing. Instead of dressing in the ways her mother did at her age, an educated Afghan girl slips quickly into exactly the kind of costume worn by her counterpart in London, Paris or New York. Instead of plaiting her hair, she bobs it in European fashion, pulls on some fine nylon stockings, pushes her feet into moccasins, and dabs her smiling lips with bright red lipstick.

The diet of an ordinary Afghan consists of the bread-cake called *nan* or *dodai*. This is usually made of wheat or maize flour. The average man takes two meals a day—at noon and in the evening. In the morning he takes tea with a piece of bread which is cooked in a *tandor* (oven). The Afghans are very fond of meat. There is a proverb in Pashto that even burnt meat is better than pulses. Black tea has become very popular among all classes; green tea is usually served after meals. *Pilau*, spiced rice, is the most favourite Afghan dish. Every Afghan is fond of *kabab* (roasted meat) which can be had in every restaurant or tea shop. In winter the use of dried meat, called *landi*, is very common.

Along the roads there are restaurants (chai-khana, meaning tea-houses) that serve Afghan specialities, like *kabab*, pilau, cold dish of egg-plant mixed with yogurt, and hot chicken soup. For about one dollar you can eat until your belt and buttons pop. Fortunately, Afghan menu provides fruits also, the finest in the world. It would be rather difficult to lift yourself from the table after having such delicious dishes.

Changing Status of Afghan Women:—The religion of Islam raised the status of women. It gave them the right to own, acquire and even inherit property. "In Arabia the women went unveiled," says Professor Levy "a century and a half after the death of the Prophet." This high status was, however, modified during the expansion of Islam in Persia and further east. The strong vigorous traditions of female seclusion observed in Iran since the days of Darius affected the social life of the Moslem conquerors and by the time of Harun-ar-Rashid, veiling of the face had become an established fact.

In Arabia men also wore a veil as a protection against the burning sands of the

deserts, but the women appear to have enjoyed great freedom, and to have moved about unrestricted and unveiled. The acceptance of Islam by the Turks accelerated the tendency to strengthen the authority of the male over the female. When the Turks, as the heirs of Arabo-Khurasani civilisation, overran Central Asia and established their authority there, women could not gain back the original freedom granted them by the Arabian Prophet. On the other hand, during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, the repeated tribal movements in Central Asia, which drove hordes of immigrants in successive waves into Afghanistan and Iran, reinforced the need for guaranteeing the greater safety of the women-folk and removing them as far as possible from the public gaze. Hence the system of female seclusion with all its vigours took root.

It was customary in ancient Iran to wear a small veil over the nose and the mouth while appearing in the presence of a sovereign or reading the sacred book of Avesta, to cover the smell and the exhalation of the mouth. This little veil, commonly known among the Zoroastrians as *ruband*, is known as *panam* or *paiti-dana*

in the Avesta. Later on, it was adopted by women in order to protect themselves from the effects of the evil eye. A poet says:

Butta nigara az chashm-e-bad biturs hamay
Chira nadari ba kheshtan hamay tu panam.

Translation : O fair damsel, art thou not afraid of the evil eye, why dost thou go about without a *panam*?

Women in Afghanistan, especially in the countryside, go about without veil, taking an active part in the outdoor work along with their husbands and sharing with them the full responsibilities of family life. It is only in the cities that a few women still cling to veil, the sack like garment which covers the body from head to toe.

In northern Afghanistan women take an active part in the carpet industry. The rich and famous Afghan carpets and rugs are the work of women's hands, women who have spent their lives from earliest childhood to motherhood and grandmotherhood at the loom. The art of carpet-weaving has survived to this day and is carried on mostly by the delicate sex, who still weave the designs handed down from generation to generation. Afghan women still prove to be the best

rugmakers, for their small agile fingers can tie as many as three thousand knots a day.

It is interesting to note the changes which have taken place during the past few decades in the status of Afghan women. Of these changes the one which is sure to have the greatest effect upon the life of the people is the emancipation of women. In fact, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the most fundamental movement during recent years is the freeing of Afghan women from the veil.

A generation ago, except for the daughters of well-to-do families, most Afghan girls were uneducated if not entirely illiterate. Marrying in their early teens, they became the mothers of large families before they were thirty years old. Even if they were sincere and affectionate, what cultural contribution could these mothers give to their children other than superstition and bigotry which they themselves had inherited from their ancestors? How could there be progress and improved standards of living when the majority of the women were unable to do their share in promoting educational and social welfare? A Moslem writer has recently remarked that a

country with veiled women is like a body with one leg.

In the past, men spent most of their leisure time without the refining influence of their wives. Today Afghan women are rapidly becoming such true companions of their husbands that they share their social life together, joining them in evening parties and finding new pleasure in their intellectual discussion.

Formerly young couples lived with their parents. Today, at least in the cities, they are starting life in their own apartments, free from old restraints and responsibilities, but faced with new ones. The spirit of enlightened liberty is now spreading over the whole face of the country and most of the women are voluntarily coming out of seclusion to shoulder these new responsibilities. This forward movement has steadily increased. Today women are playing an important role in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the people. A decade ago they were entering a new life; today they are busy helping to shape this new world.

The revolution continues at the Universities and other educational institutions where a girl

has the unprecedented nerve to argue with a male student. She announces to her astonished parents that she has fallen in love with a young man of her own choice and is going to marry him. She attends public meetings, goes to cinemas and can listen to a political speech and take part in demonstrations. Her position in the social order is certainly being revolutionized. New family laws give dignity to women, security to the home, and happiness to the family, which is the nucleus of all culture and civilisation. Afghan women according to the New Constitution have equal rights with men in all sphere of economic, cultural, political and other activities. She has the right to elect and be elected.

Village Life.—An Afghan village is a world of its own, calm, serene and almost independent and indifferent to what is going on in the world. The villagers are noted for their simplicity, hospitality and sincerity. They are deeply religious and extremely conservative. The real charm of Afghan rural life, however, lies in its calm and quiet atmosphere, where no one seems to be in a desperate hurry about anything. There is a deep peacefulness about life that imparts an air of timelessness to one's thought

and action. One finds himself in an enchanting land, hearing the songs of a donkey driver or the flute of a herdboy. At harvest time the whole land seems to burst into song. And romance, too, is not far to seek. The girls go down to the streams to fill their pitchers with water wearing their best attire. The young lover may steal a glance from the fine eyebrows of his beloved as she walks past with her pitcher. All of this culminates in love songs, sung by girls and boys of the village.

Pastoral Life.—The manner of life of the Afghans is by no means uniform throughout the country. A small number of the population is still leading a nomadic life. These *Kochis* (as they are called) have no fixed habitat and chiefly live in tents— *ghizhdi*. These tents are made of extended wooden lattice work, covered with black felt manufactured from wool, and can easily be taken down, folded and carried on the backs of camels and ponies. Life is chiefly dependent on the rearing of herds of camels, horses, cattle, sheep and goats. The flocks and herds are driven back and forth between the lowland and highland pastures, over routes which they and their ancestors have followed for centuries. In

so doing they generally cross international boundary lines, but it is often without objection on the part of governments concerned. The *Kochis* claim certain grazing rights in pastures which they visit with their flocks, and these rights are seldom disputed. The various tribes wander in definite areas, recognized as their special reserves but all seek higher districts in the middle of summer to avoid the heat and pests of the plains and return to lower levels for the winter.

In these migrations, the *Kochis* carry with them all of their possessions and thus they live very simply. A single tent shelters a whole family. During the day it usually furnishes all the shade to be had, while at night it can be closed to give protection from the cold and winds.

It is indeed a fine spectacle to meet a caravan of *kochis* moving. Huge shaggy camels lumber down the rocky slopes, followed by donkeys, horses, sheep, goats, and fierce-eyed watchdogs. Among the animals walk the proud *kochis*, tall, lean, fiery-looking, often carrying rifles on their shoulders.

The *kochis* often carry with them rich carpets, which they want to sell at a profit. These carpets are of various colours and designs, but the most interesting to the connoisseur are the *Daulatabadi* and *Mervi*, soft as velvet and of every imaginable shade and colour. These carpets are tied in neat bundles together with the tents and cooking utensils of the nomads, and are seen slung on either side of the camels. Looking like a surrealist painting and tied to the top are children joggling along, fast asleep and in sitting posture. From a distance they represent a strange sight, bobbing up and down like large rag dolls. Now and again one whimpers but is soon lulled to sleep by the 'pad, pad, tinkle pad' of the camel's feet and the bell at its throat, as it moves its head up and down in a grotesque way, its legs staggering and its teeth showing like those of a large rodent. Occasionally a newly-born camel walks up from the rear and nuzzles its mother, its woolly body in strange contrast to its long unsteady legs. The silence is sometimes suddenly broken by a harsh word from the leading camel driver, who speaks in a jargon known only to those of his profession. A visitor develops a new perspective on life as he

sees a camel sneering down at him or a tiny donkey doing the work of a thirty horsepower truck.

Along with the caravan walk the stalwart *kochi* women, contemptuous of veil, and swinging along blithely on camels' back or on foot, beautiful and ethereal as a Botticelli painting, or like the fairies of the Caucasus of whom oriental literature is so full. Some of them are black-eyed and olive-skinned with raven hair, others are fair and blue-eyed with golden or red hair. But whatever their complexion, their features are so flawless that they look more like pictures out of a book than real women. They do not lack colour either; the sun and the wind have given them red cheeks and luscious ruby lips accentuated by their contrasting dress of sombre black.

To the anthropologist and the sociologist these colourful nomads furnish an interesting study. They have succeeded in preserving their ancestral culture and heritage to a great extent even to this day.

This pastoral life, though a difficult one, has many advantages. It is carefree and secure,

uniting the advantages of various climates, and affording relief from the monotonous city life in frequent change of scene, and never-failing sources of field sports. The nomad, accustomed to hardship, is strong, well-built and courageous.

The number of these tent-dwellers has greatly diminished during the past few years, and is still rapidly dwindling. The construction of dams and the creation of new acreage have been, undoubtedly, a strong inducement to these wandering tribes to adopt a more settled mode of life.

How often the price of progress has been to turn proud, aristocratic nomads into pitifully limited farmers or factory workers, shorn of their traditions and carefree life.

Urban Life.—Afghan urban life offers an almost bewildering medley of sights and sounds. Here is the traditional beauty of narrow twisted streets, where a hundred shades of colour meet and mingle. There are also the broad thoroughfares and lofty edifices of a modern city, displaying its varied life in the blaze of neon of every colour and hue. The bazaars are lively, colourful and buzzing, where people of different

nationalities and races meet, and where the smiths tap out their delicate scrollwork and shape trays and pitchers with clanging hammers.

Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, is pulsating with new life. It is a city of many contrasts. One can see its stately domes and minarets rising out of a flat mass of clay-packed mudroofs and its broad avenues and blocks of modern buildings cutting across narrow lanes which tread their serpentine path through the heart of the city. Large American limousines glide past with carts, donkeys, and huge shaggy camels. Smartly uniformed soldiers and traffic policemen rub shoulders with sturdy-bearded tribesmen in turbans and loose-flying clothes. Women promenade on the pavements, some clad in the latest European fashion, tightskirted and wearing high-heeled shoes, others lumbering beneath heavy veils, which cover them from head to foot. Undaunted fruit-sellers spout poetry and lovingly describe their grapes as diamonds of paradise. Alongside modern up-to-date restaurants and cafes, one sees tea shops, where men sit cross-legged on gaudy carpets sipping tea and listening to a *rabab* or music blaring from a loud-speaker.

Here in Kabul, the throbbing centre of the Afghans, the ancient and the modern meet in complete harmony; here one sees old Aryana in the midst of modern Afghanistan.

Some Popular Superstitions.—Uneducated Afghans and particularly women are most susceptible to superstition and believe in all sorts of evil spirits and supernatural beings, whom they call by various names, such as jinns, *shishak mather-e-all*, *ghool-e-biaban*, etc., and whom they think have powers over the destinies of men. These evil spirits, according to popular belief, haunt old deserted places, such as graveyards, river banks, and ruined and neglected houses. These devils are described as powerful beings in different forms and shapes. Some are dark, others fair and luminous. Some are uncouth and deformed, others beautiful and attractive. The spirits of departed men and women are much dreaded and are believed to be wandering about haunting the living. Places where men have suffered violent deaths are dreaded most and avoided as far as possible. It is a matter of great surprise that an average Afghan is bold enough to face death smilingly, yet he has not the heart

to visit a place supposed to be haunted by a jinn or an evil spirit.

In the villages, when somebody falls ill, the first person to be consulted is a *mulla* or *pir*, soothsayer or an astrologer (*najumi*), as the malignant influence of evil spirits or planets is believed to be the primary cause of disease. The wearing of a *tawiz* (amulet) is supposed to ward off calamities. This charm is usually sewn into a small leather pouch or encased in a silver covering and is suspended by a string around the neck of the baby or a young beautiful girl or a newly-wedded couple, for it is believed that such people are more susceptible to the evil effects of these spirits. Around the neck of the newly-born babies various sorts of talismans, amulets, charms and even claws of wild animals, mostly those of the lion, are hung to avert the evil eye or to ward off bad spirits. When praising a child for any attribute, God's name (*nam-e-khudda*) must be uttered first and his blessings invoked to avert the evil eye (*nazar-e-bad* or *chashm-e-bad*), which only praise will beget. The evil eye is also supposed to be possessed by some women, and God's name must be uttered to keep off the

calamitous effect. Even the Afghan poets have not refrained from expressing their fear of the evil eye. One of them, referring to the beauty of his beloved, says :

Rukh-e-shireen kih tu dari kudam mah darad,
Khuda hameshah zi chashm-e-bad nigah darad.

Translation : The sweet face that thou hast is not even possessed by the moon, may God protect it from the evil eye.

Many are the dangers which Afghan parents fear for their babies. The greatest of all is that which comes with a thunderstorm (*baba ghurghuri*). If the baby is the only child that its parents have, they feel almost certain that it will be struck by lightning. In the early stage of the child's life, the parents will not leave the baby alone in a room nor would they take it out of the house at night. It is thought that at night evil spirits are at large and sure to hurt a child of tender age. Whenever the baby is carried out-of-doors, a veil is placed over its face. This again is because of the fear of the evil eye or lest the child be looked upon by beggars, criminals, diseased persons or people of bad character.

The evil-tongued (*siah-zuban*) generally goes with the evil eye. The word of a man with an evil tongue is believed to be more deadly than the sword. If a man seemingly afflicted with this malady remarks, on seeing a child, that it looks sweet and healthy, the child is feared to fall ill or even die. If such a man casually mentions, on seeing a fruit tree in blossom, that it promises to yield good fruits, the tree is sure to wither away.

Among the Afghans the right side or right leg is considered to be more lucky than the left. When entering a house, a conscientious Afghan puts his right foot first. No gift is received or given with a left hand ; both the hands may be used if it is too heavy or to show more respect to the giver.

Few people in the world have such a firm belief in astrology as do the Afghans. The time for an important ceremony or a journey to a foreign land or even a trip within the country is either fixed by an astrologer or by taking an omen from the Holy Quran or the *Diwan of Khwaja Hafiz.* The book is opened at random and the first line sighted is read and interpreted.

An Afghan prince, in his autobiography,* says on the occasion of his birth : "Peculiar and highly superstitious precautions were taken to protect me from the evil spirits and charms of my step-mothers, things in which my mother had implicit faith. But the emergency never occurred because of the alleged measures of my mother's aunt, a lady credited with occult powers. Through one of latter's devices, I was given the name of Zarintaj provisionally to conceal my sex until forty days were over. This was supposed to be the most critical period of my life, after which I could be immune from all such dangers with a row of amulets encased in solid gold, and with a heavy chain of the same precious metal hung round my neck, which often interrupted my slumber and made me doubly nervous. But mother would rather sacrifice my physical comfort than to dispense with this impregnable armour.

"Mornings and evenings magical terms were being chanted and blown into my face, to prevent the onslaught of the supernatural beings that may have been mobilized against me, before I

*Royals and Royal Mendicant, by Sardar Abdul Qadir Effendi, pp. 243-244.

was forty days old. *Burboo*, a wild bush growing in the deserts of Central Asia, believed to be offensive to evil spirits, was burnt daily near my cradle, and I was held over its thick white smoke so as to envelop my sparrow-like body."

Quite a considerable number of Afghans have an inordinate reverence for saints and shrines. Holy men are held in high esteem, and to a large extent their needs are provided for by the community. Visiting tombs (*ziyarat*) is quite common, especially on Thursday evenings. Some educated people also visit these places, beseeching the favours of the persons lying buried there.

At many shrines Afghans hold annual festivals in honour of the saint, who is usually famous for one miracle or another. Some specialize in curing mad-dog bites, others have the reputation of curing other diseases and restoring eyesight.

Bits of gaily coloured cloth flutter from the top of the shrines, for when a petitioner visits a shrine, he or she asks the saint to intercede with Allah to grant a favour, and then ties a bit of cloth to the shrine as a reminder. Some decorate the shrines with the horns of goats or sheep. No Afghan will pass by a famous tomb without

raising his hands in prayer and asking the blessings of the buried saint.

Strange stories are often heard of the miracles wrought by these saints or the mischief done by ghosts and apparitions. Here is an interesting one regarding a haunted house as related by a Kabuli gentleman :

"There is a haunted place in our house. Unless anyone has actually lived there, he would not credit how greatly haunted it is.

"The most persistent ghost is a cat, which appears from time to time in our dining room. It is a large black creature with yellow, rather baleful eyes. Sometimes when it materializes, only the front half can be seen. Our own cat has seen it several times, for he often refuses to pass the dining room, and stands at the door with his back arched and his tail fluffed out with fright. At other times, he rushes madly past, although he is old and not usually given to hurrying. We often hear footsteps on the stairs, and in rooms over head, when the whole family is assembled downstairs. I have seen a figure materialize at the top of the stairs, bearing

resemblance to a column of smoke, and disappearing almost immediately.

"One night when my son came home, he saw a little girl standing at the gate, her arms raised in greeting. She seemed to go away very quickly, so the shrubbery and garden were searched but no one was found. He did not mention this apparition to me, but we both saw it a night or two later. At first I thought it was my daughter and was puzzled, because I knew she did not have a white frock. The figure just faded away.

"I have seen this child several times since, and so has my daughter. The little girl floats out of the cloak room and disappears into the opposite wall. I have sometimes heard a child whimpering outside the bathroom late at night. At times there are violent noises in the drawing room, which was at one time enclosed by two doors. These were always bolted at night, but in the morning one was always found open.

"A friend once telephoned me just after midnight. As I answered the call, my back was towards the room. I felt a strong psychic breeze and the hair stood up at the back of my neck.

I felt someone was standing just behind me, but on turning round could see nothing. The presence hovered until I had finished my call, and the room temperature remained very low for a few minutes.

"The most breath-taking phenomenon we have experienced occurred a day or two after the anniversary of martyrdom of Hazrat-e-Imam Hussain. About three in the morning we were awakened by a loud noise like someone hammering at a heavy door. Then came man's deep voice, and later on that of a woman, agitated and pleading. Later a child cried in terror. There was the sound of running feet, going upstairs. Then overhead we heard the sound of clashing steel. A duel seemed to be in progress. A heavy thud, as though of a falling body, vibrated the ceiling. We investigated the room the next morning, but nothing had fallen down and all was as usual.

"One night a holy person with a long white beard, holding a book in his hand, materialised in our bedroom. I was asleep at the time, but awoke shortly afterwards with a feeling that a second person was in the room.

"On several occasions we have smelled incense, and that only happens when a spirit of a very high odour is present. The scent is very strong and pervades the house.

"One morning at about seven we heard the sound of smashing crockery in the kitchen. I rushed down, expecting to find a whole dinner service, at least, in smithereens. But everything was in its place, although I had the unpleasant sensation that someone was standing behind the door laughing at me."

A belief in witches and witchcrafts exists. Old women past menopause are believed to turn into witches, but rituals are known to counter their evil spells.

Before parturition the husband or a near relative sets a sword or a dagger just above the head of the wife to scare off the evil spirit, who might bring ill-luck to the child or its mother. There is an evil spirit that causes painful labour. The burning of the wild rue called *spand* is most widely current to remove the ill-luck or evil spirit. The seed of this grass when thrown over fire bursts giving out much smoke and unpleasant smell.

The masses still believe that any strange dream is a revelation and had some meaning and consequently interpret such dream. They think such dreams to be prophetic signs from which the future could be foretold. There are people who would interpret these dreams. Some believe that the dream itself will come to pass as reality, while other think that reality will turn out contrary to the dream. The dream of a loss of tooth means the loss of a close relative.

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CHAPTER IV

PASHTO LITERATURE

To those who have read books written by foreigners and about the wars with the British, the Afghans may appear somewhat rough and cruel. That they are very vindictive and revengeful, no one can deny, but they are at the same time not devoid of those soft and humane feelings and emotions that are to be found in some of the most advanced nations of the world. Those who get closer to them learn that the Afghans are one of the most affectionate and friendly of peoples capable of making sacrifices of money and even of life for their friends. It seems somewhat anomalous that those who are known for their love of money spend so lavishly to entertain their guests.

Of fine and noble sentiments they are quite capable. They love dancing and music. Their distinctive stringed instrument, the *rabab*, is sweet and capable of a profound musical performance.

Strange though it may seem to outsiders, the volume of the poetic literature in Pashto is so varied and great that it would be sufficient to

convince others of its immensity and fine quality. Who has not heard of Khushal Khan Khattak, the warrior-poet, Rahman Baba, the mystic-poet, and a host of others, classic as well as modern ?

Only a few lines from some of these works should suffice to establish the fact that the Afghans have a heritage too great to be ignored or overlooked in the realm of thought and literature.

Here is Khushal, the warrior-poet, who loved war as much as he appreciated the beauty of nature, the fragrance of flowers, and the colours of rainbow ;

O lily, O wind flower, O daffodil,
Pomegranate, jessamine, herb of sweet basil,
O rainbow, glory for a carpet spread
With brightest gem the tulip glowing red,
See! every maid plucks roses for her breast,
And flowers adorn each youth's proud turban crest,
While the quivering bow searches a melody
And each string throbs with long-drawn ecstacy
O, cup-bearer! Fill the flagon,
Fill it high
Khushal shall sing of war in revelry.

The following lines reflect the innate freedom of the human spirit, typical of Pashto mystic poetry :

Like the cypress tree, which holds its head high and is free within the confines of a garden, I, too, feel free in this world, and I am not bound by its attachments.

Here are some specimens of modern Afghan poetry translated from Pashto into English.

I SALUTE THEE, MOTHERLAND

By

Abdul Hai Habibi

I salute the towering peaks of mountains of my dear dear land;

And salute the fragrant gardens, orchards and its golden sand.

Where the shepherd melts his sound into his melodious flute,

Those verdant valleys, meadows and dales do I salute.

The songs of others' parrots and peacocks cast no spell on me;

Sweetly sound my little sparrows chirping however feebly.

Where the hawks make sallies in majestic flights;

My head bows doubly to those staggering heights.
My homage to elders, sisters and the mothers,
To fearless youth and valiant brothers.
Nothing to me can be more sublime;
When Ahmadshah, Mirwais, Nazo are mine,
To thee motherland I bow my head;
To all thy living and all thy dead.

THE KOHISTAN TWILIGHT

By

Benawa

The crests of Hindukush are ablaze,
Or the horizon is hemmed with red string;
It is a heart writhing in agony.
A blood-fount playing in full swing.
It may be the sabre of Chengiz,
Drawn from sheath for a fresh clink.
These may be the flames of love,
Or a fire in the heavens above.
The victims of Alexander's onslaught,
Are looking wistfully towards Bagram;
Or the soul of a distressed lover
Is greeting his love with a song.

It may be a cup being filled up,
From a stream of wine strong.
It may be ground of Kerbala,
Or a veil on the face of Laila.
It's heart of the shattered heavens,
Or the bosom of a desperate lover;
It may be a cup of beloved
Fallen down from her with a quiver.
It can be a lesson in deterrence,
Or a tale of impeccable lover.
Our fathers and hundred crises,
A saga of their sacrifices.
It is blood of the crusaders,
Ensanguining the hands of beloveds;
Or coffins of martyrs,
Have been sequestered by the angels.
It is reflection on the horizon,
Of the earth scarred with battles;
It is twilight on the mountain,
A sprinkling from red fountain.
Stars shimmer on the horizon,
Like pearls in fathomless ocean;
It may be the poet's imagery,
Steeped in a poignant emotion.

These may be the tears of an orphan,
Setting waves of the mains in motion.
May be teeth like pearls sparkling,
Ensconced in the mouth of a darling.
It is not a cloud that is hovering,
Like exhalation from the Kohistan;
These may be the pages of history,
Telling stories of the haloed Bamian.
It may be the dust that flies,
Taking tribute from the skies.
This must be a rivulet shining,
Or face of the heavens pining.

MY POSSESSIONS

By

Gul Pacha Ulfat

I do not boast of possessing many a beautiful garment,
A worn hat I don, but in my head dwell new ideas and thoughts;
I have scaled the dizzy heights of noble knowledge,
I dole out wisdom to scholars, so full of it are my pots.
In my grove no one will find fruits, trees or cooling water,
It is an arid sand, here imaginary flowers blossom;

I have clandestine communion with my own being.
Secretly do I talk to my people, dumb and glum though
I am.

Everyone takes me as muffled-mouthed and mute;
None is aware of the dins drumming into my ears;
The word's worries and thoughts are my companions,
I am not alone, my heart is master of vast spheres.
The blind can't shed tears and the deaf cannot hear,
But my pathetic peoms are filled with wilting cries;
What so early I have brought for the Pakhtuns,
My recompense I want, but for eternity have I set my
price.

The cold hearts may thaw for a healthier living,
Rest assured, my breath is fresh, warm and long;
Which can cause hilarious and vivacious clutter,
I possess in Pakhtu that message and a lively song.
Those which can brighten the black night of the ignorant,
Like burning lamps mine are such brilliant books;
Those who do not fear God and wallow tyrany,
With bare hands I grapple with those heartless crooks,
Let fire consume the hopes of a loathsome tyrant,
God decrees. He has hell for his chastisement.

THE FORLORN BEAUTY

By

Ulfat

I saw a fairy in tattered clothes,
Doing chores of a woman ugly and dark;
Her countenance blooming like a full moon,
And in virtue resembling angels with spark.
By birth she appeared eminent to others,
And wealthy ladies she surpassed in stature;
Can't say it was high heaven's will
Or a feat of wordly man's nature.
Such beauty radiant like rays of the sun
The world callously away from sight it threw,
It relived the role of Yusuf's serfdom.
And a golden dream in life comes true.
She whispered to me in plaintive words;
Effects of poverty on man are brute,
The beauty of poor is without any worth.
Naught are the virtues of a destitute.
Pretty looks and nature are God's blessings,
Forlon beauty is but by no one prized;
The torn attire eclipses the genius,
The truth in rags is by all despised.

Many like me handsome and noble
Ever wash others' clothes dirty and stained,
It is nothing but poverty and helplessness,
That everyone looks with eyes constrained,
The man's accomplishments are relagated,
His face verily with dust smeared;
A pearl in rags too is contemned.
A crook donning brocade is awed and feared.
In the world there are many high and dry,
Among the wealthy are base and profane,
Beware, don't be deceived by the glitter,
The humble and lowly you should never disdain.
I have beheld gems wrapped in rags,
In poor raiment nobility I have hailed;
There are pests under the silken cloak,
Swindlers roam about with their faces veiled.
Where in the torn dress is Yusuf' guilt;
In precious clothes it is Zulaikha's temerity,
Come, let us tear these colourful garments;
And within you will find abominable nudity.

Trends in Afghan Society of Today.—Contact with the West and the diffusion of modern knowledge have affected Afghan Society. There are at present three different types of reaction to this impact. (1) The conservative section which constitute the majority react against it. They want to preserve their old ideas and traditions without the contamination of the Western concept of things.

A second section has fallen a victim to the fascination of Western culture. They are subjected by the new knowledge. They have gone completely West and look down on all that is Afghan and entertain Western modes of thought and Western pattern of social life.

The third vital group of Afghan society has its root in Afghan traditions. They are fascinated but not subjected by European science, technology and way of life. Like the Japanese they want to assimilate Western civilisation without losing their identity or forgetting their rich cultural heritage and spiritual values. All of them are for active assimilating of the best in the West. Their attitude to the past as well as future is liberal. They do not wish to break with the past and are not attacking all things

past indiscriminately, rather they want to build firmly on the old foundation. They say we must take from the altars of the past fire and the glow, and not the ashes. Everything is not good simply because it is old, similarly everything should not be looked upon as good because it is new. Great men accept or reject the one or the other after careful examination and sifting. They should take inspiration from the past and should not be afraid of new ideas and Western thought and science. No nation can help its people from being influenced by the products, techniques and ideas of the rest of the world. Man may erect China Wall, they may try to lead an isolated life, but these efforts cannot succeed. World has shrunk to the extent that the existence of isolated islands in it are no longer possible.

Policy and Aspiration.—The Afghans are well aware of their past culture and present responsibilities. They are trying hard to come out of the antiquated past and stride into the twentieth century.

Afghanistan was isolated from the rest of the world until only recently. Even today it has

no outlet to the open sea which is a great handicap for trade. In spite of this drawback it is trying hard to take its place among the progressive and responsible nations of the world. It has immense natural resources yet to be developed. Tied up with Afghanistan's economic development are its problem of education. Illiteracy is prevalent and more than ninety per cent of the people cannot read or write. Schools are inadequate and quality teachers are in short supply. All these pose unprecedented challenge to educators. It needs peace and opportunity to develop it vast natural and manpower resources, and thereby provide a higher standard of living and a happier life to all of its citizen.

CHAPTER V

AFGHAN FOLKLORE

The nature of the country and its people have made Afghanistan a land of romance. From early times the Afghans have preserved the memory of great events, coloured and embellished by their imagination, and have thus produced a wealth of folklore and songs of immense charm.

The need for adopting steps to collect and preserve these tales is now felt keenly. This part of the Afghan cultural heritage will be lost to coming generations unless it is preserved. Under the impact of modern literature, folklore is already fighting its last battle of survival. It is quite possible that within a decade or so, this part of Afghan literature will become something of the past. To know something about the innermost thoughts and ideas, hopes and aspirations, often reflected in the vast collection of folklore, one must study these thousands of tales, which even now furnish ample material for the inspiration of writers and poets. Some of

these folktales are, undoubtedly, the gems of Afghan literature. These prove beyond all doubt that the quality of thinking and the level of imagination of the Afghans in those remote days were much higher than that of the present common folk, who are now living in cities and towns, and depend mostly on cinemas as their means of entertainment.

The Afghans have a style of their own in narrating these tales. Below a few specimens are given to illustrate this point :

*The Lovers of Dilaram.**

His beautiful dream came to an end. He was awake long before the morning birds. Slowly he stretched his stiff arms and looked up into the sky ; it was filled with stars. He had been sleeping on the housetop, as is the custom of people in warmer regions during the summer. He took his axe and opened the door of his mud house, his castle. His beloved dog, wagging his tail, rushed out to greet him and lick his feet. Khadi patted him on his head murmuring, "Not today, I am going alone." The dog looked at him and like a friend stood there quietly.

*By Mr. A. R. Pazhwak

A warm but pleasant breeze ruffled his scant clothing as he set off for the forest. The stars were gradually vanishing in the light of early morning. Every step brought him hope; he continued until he found the proper spot.

A lone star shone brightly; a single new hope kindled in his heart. He scanned the forest to find a tree that would be a suitable challenge to his might, a tree whose fall would be worthy of the pride of his youth. A forest may arouse reflection of being born, growing up and dying. It may bring to mind the passing of seasons, the thought of flowing waters that make things grow, or the fires which burn and destroy. But no such fancies occurred to him.

Many trees fell, one after the other. The sound of the axe awoke the forest birds. They flew from tree to tree and from one branch to another. They were used to the sound of the axe but, like us, they too constantly live a prey to fear . . . . . Dawn broke, the air lightened, and the king of stars appeared in his golden chariot.

Sunk deep in thought, the young man was sitting on a tree trunk gazing at the ground. Just as in pleasure people do not look for the

spiritual or think of God, so during the day they seldom look at the sky. What was he thinking about? What was it that he could not forget? No one knew. In youth reflections are visions, seldom interpretable.

Love is great and hope is valuable. Love in the heart of the humblest has the same grandeur as that upon which the greatest of us pride ourselves. Just as the kings forget their thrones and crowns, he too had forgotten his trees and firewood. Just as they put away their royal sceptre, he too had thrown away his axe. Toilers have no gold-bedecked horses on which to ride and scatter people with their haughty glances. Their fingers are devoid of the jewels which dazzle the eyes. They acquire their strength and greatness from others' toil, who have only blisters to show upon their hands.

He cut a few more trees but there was no end to the trees in the forest. Just as the affluence and caprice of some people have no end, so too the toil and labour of these people have no end. It never ends.

The sun grew warmer. The earth, too, grew warmer. From the trees the birds flew down to

the floor of the jungle. The youth lifted his earthen pot from the grass shaded by trees and drank. For toiler water has the intoxication of wine. Their heads are never troubled by the wine cup.

He came out of the forest and looked at the path leading to the village. Nobody was in sight. Time lags when one is waiting. The future creeps in as if with broken legs. Sometimes even the chariot of the sun seems to halt. The hoofs of the golden horses nail down, the fiery whip cannot make them continue.

He returned to gather green twigs and cool grass and spread them at the foot of a young tree. Then, like a careless child he stretched out on his green bed. Love sometimes makes the old feel young but it makes the young feel like children. He was younger than the youngest tree in the forest.

Youth is full of strange tales, but the story of love is the most repeated of all. He closed his eyes and saw a legendary hero who although poor had conquered the heart of the daughter of the richest tribal chief by his might and ability. Jealousy, even in imagination, is a

burning fire. His heart pounded. He was eager to wrestle with the hero and try his strength, until he came to that part of the story where the heroine kept the hero waiting and did not fulfil her promise. A tear-drop rolled down his cheek. He rose trembling with fear to take another look at the path leading to the village.

He had barely moved from the green couch when he saw a maiden walking towards him. Seeing her, he was happy. They had grown up together from childhood and were nurtured in love's tender care. They sat down in silence. The youngman imagined himself more victorious than the legendary hero. Often it is given to the eyes to speak when the tongue is tied. What one would have expected them to say was left unsaid. The secret of love is holy but dreadful. The young man was silent filled with inner rapture.

The maiden was hidden behind a curtain drawn over her hopes. As a rule the woodcutter was bashful, but as when a fire starts in a forest the mightiest trees bow their heads before its fury, so too with men. Men are like mighty poplars. They are huge and strong but they

do not turn to ashes. The youth's heart was full of yearning.

He lifted his head and looked at the young girl's face, and immediately her eyes were downcast. Khadi said, "Bibo, our childhood days were not like this." "Yes, then we were children," the maiden answered. "But don't you think this silence is childish?" the man said. Bibo replied, "I haven't put my fingers on your lips, yet you are silent." At that moment she saw a snake and cried, "Khadi, kill that snake." "Let it go on its own way," Khadi replied, "those who enter a forest at night should never arouse the animosity of snakes. I have never as yet been bitten by a snake." Love talk shortens even a conversation about snakes. Bibo's face turned scarlet. The youth said," I haven't put my fingers on your lips either, so why are you silent?" And when she did not answer, Khadi continued, "Don't be silent. Let me kiss your hands." "I only speak to those who do not speak strange and new words to old friends," Bibo said, "my mother used to say that this forest is haunted. Now I don't know what devil whispered into your ears to talk to me like this." The man's face turned pale. He said, "Devils

never teach love. They teach hatred. I love you. Aren't we in love with each other? Am I not young any more?" Bibo murmured, "It will be better if I leave, otherwise I am afraid I shall become as immodest as you are. It would have been proper to ask my father. Old folks always know such things better than the young ones." She walked quickly away.

The youth said, "Bibo, I too have to leave this forest and with regret I must say goodbye to this country whose devils teach love." There was no answer.

The forest's spirits gathered together and told Khadi to bid adieu to the hamlet of Gulistan. They told him that the vast plains of Garmser were no longer large enough for him and that the trees of forests would no longer give him refuge in their shade. He could no longer hunt the antelope of Bakwa desert, and on hunting days the water of the Dilarm river would taste bitter in his mouth. In his imagination the figure of the legendary hero reappeared riding a steed. The hero said to him, "My story ends with keeping her waiting in turn."

Khadi lifted his axe and went out of the forest. He walked rapidly as trying to catch up with the legendary hero. He imagined that Bibo was following him and would call him. But there was no one to follow him, still less to stop him. In fact his heart and soul were forcing him to run away from bliss and seek refuge in misery.

The day came to an end. As the sun set behind the tall trees and the stars began to shine, the villagers climbed to their roofs, but Khadi was nowhere to be found. The roof of the tower where Bibo generally slept overlooked all the roofs of the hamlet of Gulistan. Her father was called "Possessor of treasures."

Circumstances make one rich and others poor. The rich then permit the poor to build their huts near their mansions, but they are not really helping the poor. Khadi lived next door to his uncle, "Possessor of treasures."

Day broke and the sun rose high. Bibo's mind was heavy with the thought of Khadi. Bibo went to the forest with Khadi's mother who thought he might have been bitten by a snake. "He never bothered the snakes in the jungle,"

Bibo assured her. His father did not know about this as his wealthy brother had taken him with him on business and they had not yet returned. Khadi's mother wept at the foot of each tree in the forest but none of them spoke of Khadi.

Bibo cried but her cries did not reach Khadi. Evening had spread her dark wings over the forest when Bibo asked Khadi's mother to return home, but she did not. Only mothers can spend dark nights in spacious forests for the sake of their sons.

Constrained by circumstances Bibo told her the story of Khadi, and then Khadi's mother realized that her son would not be found in the nearby forest but in the distant plains. Despairingly they returned: the maiden to her mansion and the old woman to her humble abode.

When the fathers returned from their journey, they heard Khadi's story and looked for him, but every effort to find the wandering lover failed.

One night Khadi's father asked his wife, "Which unknown path can he be treading?" "The path of love," she answered . . . . . and the

old woman was silent as she looked at the imposing tower of her brother's mansion.

Bibo's father questioned her and she replied that she was riding the horse of love and had given the reins to a young man who wished to let the horse get started on its way but his whip was poverty.

When Khadi arrived at Dilaram, he saw a caravan from India on its way to Isfahan. He went with it. The caravan encamped at Bakwa, and one magnificent tent rose above the other. The camels knelt down and the caravan-bells were silent. Beautiful moths danced around the lights lit by travellers, and the young people sang the *Zend*. Khadi had neither a tent nor a candle and no moth came near him but the sound of revelry reached his ears. A fire leaps in the heart of the lonely that no ocean can extinguish. When Khadi raised his voice in mournful song, all the other sounds of the caravan died out. He sang about love, loneliness, poverty and remorse. The Indian merchant sent for him though his guards maintained that Khadi was a thief. The merchant said, "The thief in a caravan would not let his presence be known by

singing." He asked Khadi to relate his life's story and not knowing how to dissemble, Khadi put the travellers to sleep with his long tale of woe.

The night was still young when a guard shouted. Everyone woke up. The guard cried that a ferocious animal was approaching the caravan. Khadi went out to investigate while the travellers remained where they were. When he came upon the animal, it rolled at his feet and Khadi said, "You are the one who will accompany me from Gulistan to Isfahan." Sometimes a man's best friend is his dog.

A traveller had once said, "Do not travel through Bakwa in daylight." On the way Khadi told the travellers about it, so they set forth at night. On the way Khadi entertained the leader of the caravan with stories of hunting, while with every step he went further away from his old hunting grounds.

Honesty is a worthy treasure. The poor who possess this are content. The rich always need such people. Gradually the Indian merchant came to trust Khadi greatly and wherever he walked through the streets of Isfahan people praised him.

Four autumns went by with Bibo in Gulistan and Khadi at Isfahan. The village girls called Bibo the "Yellow Flower" as an indication of her forlorn state. Everyone knew of her love and separation, but no one laughed at her; on the contrary they cried. Generally the daughters of the wealthy are respected even if they are without love or wisdom; at least Bibo's heart was full of love.

Khadi wrote to his father and uncle from Isfahan. He did not say much about himself but he was eager to have his travels appreciated by Bibo's father. He mentioned that in the next spring he would be back in Gulistan.

Spring came. Every day Bibo and the girls of Gulistan went to gather flowers from the plain of Dilaram. She claimed that the flowers of that plain were prettier than other flowers. While the others plucked flowers, Bibo kept a lookout for the caravan from Isfahan.

The caravan appeared on the horizon led by a man on a camel. The girls waited for it by the roadside. Bibo borrowed a *chadar* (scarf) from a poor girl and covered her head with it as she did not wish to be recognized. The camel

approached slowly. Bibo asked for the name of the caravan. When she found out that it belonged to the Indian merchant, she enquired about Khadi and was told that he was with the caravan.

The maidens of Gulistan were happy for Bibo's sake. Bibo's joy knew no bounds. The edge of her skirt slipped from her fingers and all the flowers scattered at her feet. Bibo laughed and tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. She asked her friends what she should do, and they told her that since he was here it would be better for them to meet him in the village. So they returned.

The caravan reached Dilaram but the usual pleasure accompanying a halt in a special place was not apparent. Everything was done silently. Khadi's dog stood in front of the magnificent tent of the Indian merchant at the hamlet of Gulistan. The Indian merchant said to Khadi, "This is the place where we met first. It was certainly good fortune for an old man to meet a young man like you. I would have liked so much to stay in Gulistan and present your fiancee with gifts from Isfahan. Unfortunately, I have fallen ill. There is little hope of my living any more,

and I have to hurry. I cannot stop on the way. My death away from home would mean misfortune for those who are waiting for me."

Khadi's lashes were wet. Tears filled his eyes as he said, "It is not often that a young man meets a strange old man who becomes dearer to him than his father, and seldom does an old man accept someone else's son as his own." The merchant cried pitifully and stretched his arms towards Khadi. The merchant continued, "There are people in my caravan with whom I have travelled all my life but sometimes strange ideas bother a man. No matter how unfounded these ideas may be, I would not like to have you away from my side. Come home with me. You are young and the distance between India and Khurasan is not too great for you."

Meanwhile Bibo reached the village. She went to Khadi's mother and threw herself in her arms, laughing and crying as she gave her the good news of Khadi's arrival. She said, "I have never been a mother and so do not know how you feel, but I can tell you just how I feel."

The evening star rose. The sick merchant, moaning with pain and homesickness, said, "We

must move, Khadi." Khadi came out of the tent and looked at the sky. The dog threw himself at his feet. Khadi pointed to the path leading to Gulistan. The dog left for the village. Khadi called the travellers to get ready. The noise of bells filled the air as the caravan continued on its way. The sky was filled with stars and Bibo watched the lane of the village. The dog arrived at Khadi's home and Khadi's mother seeing him gave a cry of joy and then fainted. Her husband sprinkled water on her face. They went out to watch the lane, but nobody was in sight. The caravan was moving further and further from the village.

Instead of coming to Gulistan, Khadi had left for India. He had abandoned his desires. In the heart of the pure, pity and gratitude are greater than desire. No force can conquer love, but love itself is so great that disloyalty is shunned.

At dawn Khadi's old father was still looking for the footprints of his son, searching for whatever might tell him of his wandering boy. The caravan had left in a great hurry and nobody had informed him that his son might return after

doing a noble deed. He returned disappointedly. He scolded Bibo, cursed the dog, cried with his wife, and went to sleep never to wake again.

The caravan reached India. Rich and poor came out to meet them, but their joy was short-lived as the generous merchant who brought gifts for the poor from Isfahan was on his deathbed.

The door of a magnificent mansion was flung open and the sick merchant was taken in on a cot. He opened his eyes to find his wife and young daughter crying at his bedside. A happy smile came to his lips. He thanked God and then asked for Khadi, but nobody knew where he was. He sent word for Khadi to be brought to him quickly.

Khadi came and the dying merchant peered at him. He held Khadi's hand and muttered, "Khadi, this is my wife and this is my daughter, my only child." Khadi kissed the old lady's hands and looked at the young girl. The old man went on, "This is Khadi. He is my son. I leave you to his care." He smiled contentedly and closed his eyes for ever.

Khadi stayed in India for a while, but after he had fulfilled his obligations to the merchant's

family, he asked for permission to leave. The old lady treated him as a son and considered her fortune his. Then Khadi told her of his love for Bibo. The news was painful to the old woman and struck like lightning at the hopes of the girl who had fallen deeply in love with him. She had considered him her own and her heart like a pigeon was unaware of residing in a falcon's nest. She had not realized that the kingdom she wanted for herself was already ruled by someone else.

When Khadi discovered this, he upbraided his misfortune. This was the first time that he cursed his destiny. Some people like to be loved by many but to Khadi this was a dilemma. Two women loved him and he had but one heart.

The time for his departure drew near and the Indian maiden cried so much that Khadi promised to come back next spring with his bride to live with them. The merchant's daughter preferred to be Bibo's sister than to stay away from Khadi. She gave Khadi a necklace for Bibo. Then love was king and hatred was banished.

Khadi set out for Khurasan. Memories of the plain of Dilaram and the forest of Gulistan

filled his mind. He was intoxicated with the thought of seeing Bibo. He did not stop on the way, for love and youth were like two mighty steeds to which Khadi tied the chariot of his desire, and he flew rapidly to Gulistan.

He reached Dilaram at midnight. The moon was shining brightly. The plain of Bakwa looked like a pool of mercury in the moonlight. He thought to himself, "It is no use going to Gulistan in the middle of night." So he lay down on the grass.

The long journey had been tiring and he immediately fell into a deep sleep. His sweet dreams had barely ended when he heard his horse pawing on the ground. He lifted his head and looked around. There was no one. He went to sleep again, paying no heed to his clever and loyal steed.

He dreamt that he was sitting on a log in the forest, talking to his childhood sweetheart, when suddenly Bibo cried, "Khadi, kill that snake." He felt a pain in his arm and woke up. It was a dark venomous snake which had just injected its deadly poison into his veins. He tried to mount his horse but could not.

Next morning a passer-by found him stretched out on the plain and rushed to Gulistan with the news of Khadi's death. The villagers surrounded Khadi's body. Bibo was among them. She threw herself on Khadi's body and held it tightly. When they took her away from Khadi's body, they found that they were separating two bodies whose souls were together and would never be parted again.

Khadi and Bibo were buried next to each other, and their graves are still a place of pilgrimage for the young people. It is said that the first to have her wish fulfilled at the sanctuary was the merchant's daughter who could not bear to be away from Khadi. She had lost the balance of her mind and had followed the path leading to Khorasan. When she heard of Khadi's fate, she had asked for nothing but death, and her wish was granted. She died in Dilaram and was buried in a grave that bears her name even today. The edifice of love is eternal; time can do it no harm.

Saiful Muluk and Badrul Jamal

(Traditional)

In ancient times, there ruled a great king over Egypt. He had a handsome and dashing son,

Saiful Muluk, who was very found of adventures. Once when the Prince had set out for his long journey towards home, he found himself stranded in a new and strange land. He liked the country for its beautiful valleys, snow-covered mountains and the singing of hill-torrents.

Weary of travelling, he decided to stay there for some time. He lay down and slept till late. At this time some fairies from Mount Caucasus, accompanying their Queen, passed over the valley and saw something shining brightly down below. To satisfy her curiosity, the Queen ordered her companions to descend into the glen. When they fluttered down, they saw a beautiful youth sleeping near a gushing stream. The Queen started laughing at what she called her silly curiosity. Her silvery laughter wakened the Prince, who was surprised to find himself surrounded by a galaxy of beauties, lovelier than any he had ever seen in the whole course of his adventurous career.

"Who may you be?" he enquired, addressing the Queen. "Oh, don't worry, we are fairies from the distant fairyland on Mount Caucasus. There is a lake nearby and we are going there to bathe."

With these words she flew away, followed by the others, leaving the Prince surprised and spell-bound.

Among the fairies was Badrul Jamal, the fairy with blue wings. She was the Queen's closest companion and was the prettiest of them all. The Prince could not help falling in love at first sight with Badrul Jamal. When she disappeared beyond the grey and white clouds, he felt a pang in his heart. He got up immediately and started wandering up the snow-covered mountains and in the glacier-bound valleys in search of the lake and Badrul Jamal.

After many a day's wanderings, he at last succeeded in reaching the lake. Every night he waited for the fairies to come, and one night he spied his beloved, the blue-winged one along with the Queen and the other fairies, bathing in the crystalline blue-green waters of the lake. He gazed at her in agony unable to devise any plan of meeting his beloved. Soon it was time for the departure to fairy-land. As they were about to leave, a friendly fairy, who knew that the Prince had fallen in love with the blue-winged fairy, suggested to him sympathetically that he take

away the clothes of Badrul Jamal, and hide himself somewhere when the fairies came to the lake next time. Consequently, when the fairies returned to the lake, the Prince hid his loved one's clothes and waited. After bathing, the fairies flew away leaving Badrul Jamal to search for her missing clothes and her wings. Finding her alone, the Prince restored her things to her, and taking her hand said, "Now I won't let you go, my darling. You will be the queen of my heart."

Badrul Jamal cried and wept, but the Prince would not let her go. She threatened, pleaded, but to no avail. And slowly she realized that Saiful Muluk was the handsomest youth she had ever seen in her life, and when she looked up in his adoring eyes, she knew that she too loved him. So in her honeyed voice she murmured in his ear, "Let us run away from here, darling, else some danger befall us." So away they went and in the hurry the fairy forgot her blue wings by the lake.

Meanwhile in fairy-land and high on the remote Caucasus mountains, there was a great commotion when the fairies related how Badrul Jamal had been left behind at the lake. The loudest clamour was made by the powerful giant,

Oanda, who from his dwelling on a neighbouring peak, used to watch every evening for the blue-winged fairy to flutter by. When he heard that she was missing, he straightaway rushed to the lake but found no sign of Badrul Jamal. He cried and shouted, "Badrul Jamal," but to no avail.

The high mountains all around and the lofty peaks stood silent as his cry echoed through hill and dale. Prince Saiful Muluk heard it and was greatly frightened. He hid the fairy in a big cave, a few miles away. Oanda kept on shouting and when he found Badrul Jamal's wings lying by the side of the lake, he was convinced that she was drowned in the calm blue waters. Overcome with disappointment and rage, he crushed a large mountain with his foot, threw it into the lake and the water of the lake started flowing that way in a stream. The lake emptied but Badrul Jamal could not be found.

The Prince and Badrul Jamal spent sixteen years hidden in the same cave until they learned that Oanda had died of grief. Then they escaped to Egypt. Saiful Muluk's father, the king, had died in the absence of the Prince, who then

ascended the throne, and both of them lived happily ever after.

The Prince is the romantic character from the legends of Gul Bakoli, and is regarded as the hero of the fairy tales. The lake, where Saiful Muluk found his beloved, still shimmers blue and crystalline in the picturesque district of Bamian. The valley is surrounded by the Koh-i-Baba Range, some of whose peaks rise to 15,000 feet, their tops perpetually covered with snow, feeding the beautiful lakes below. The cave, where they took shelter, is still to be seen in the happy valley of Bamian, just below the Buddha's statue.

Long ago the young Prince courted the blue-winged fairy beside the glistening lonely waters of Band-e-Amir. Today the same lake sparkles and glitters, but no fairies come to bathe there. Only of late it has become a famous tourists' resort.

Princess Parizad

(Traditional)

Once upon a time there lived in the ancient city of Kabulistan two young princely brothers. Aslam, the elder, was tall and handsome, but arrogant and selfish ; Khan, the younger, though

handsome as his brother, was gentle and quick-witted. These two were deadly rivals for the hand of Princess Parizad, a girl whose beauty had enslaved the hearts of many men.

At the moment when the story begins the brothers were in despair. Each had pressed his claims with Parizad, but to no avail. The maiden, being young and fickle-minded, could not choose between them.

Then one day, Parizad summoned the brothers and addressed them thus : "Your Highnesses," said the Princess, "before I make the choice between you I need more time to ponder. This then is what I propose. For a year and a day I shall see no man except my father. At the end of that time, I promise I shall give you my decision. Meanwhile," Parizad continued demurely, "you may each send me one gift. I make only one condition : the gift which you send must not cost more than one hundred thousand *ashrafis*. Think well before you choose it, I beg you, for the one whose gift I value shall be the one I marry."

Obedient to Parizad's command, the two young princes departed. Each consoled himself

with the thought that his would be the present which would win the maiden's heart.

Now it happened that about this time a merchant, Hassan, a dealer of precious stones, passed through the city gates. The rivalry between the two brothers was by this time common knowledge, and the merchant, learning of it, went first to see Aslam. He spread a cloth at the Prince's feet and on it poured the jewels--diamonds, rubies, pearls and emeralds. Among them Aslam saw an enormous ruby, the size of an ostrich egg. When he picked it up, the stone flashed and sparkled as he turned it in his fingers. He had never seen so big a ruby. It was a magnificent stone. A cunning smile spread over his features and he turned to the merchant. "I'll buy this ruby," said Aslam, and paying the price he sent it at once as a gift to Parizad. When the merchant had departed, Aslam sat back with a smile, satisfied that his brother would not find a better present.

The following morning the merchant called on Khan. Again he spread his cloth on the floor and poured his jewels upon it. But the Prince, instead of inspecting his gems, gave the merchant a riddle to solve.

"Tell me," said the Prince, "what gift could be made twelve times without giving more than one present ?" When the merchant had thought for a moment, a gleam came into his eyes. Then he showed the Prince a necklace of twelve exquisite pearls. They were small but each was perfect and they were beautifully matched.

"Your Highness," said the merchant, "by cutting the cord of this pearl-necklace you have twelve separate pearls; each one makes a gift in itself, yet when rethreaded on the cord form but one single necklace."

The Prince laughed aloud : "I perceive that your wisdom is great," he said, and he bought the necklace, paying no more for it than his brother had paid for the ruby. Every month of their separation, he reminded Parizad of his love for her by sending her one of the pearls. With the first pearl he sent the cord and with it a note which read : "String the pearls together on this cord and the twelve tokens of my love for you make but a single present."

When the year—plus one day—had elapsed, the two young suitors presented themselves at the home of the Princess. Aslam was smiling arrogantly ; Khan looked merely thoughtful.

The brothers seated themselves on couches and awaited Parizad's arrival. Aslam looked at his rival. "What," he sneered, "are you going to give us as a wedding present? I may as well tell you that we are expecting something special." His brother only smiled.

Then the sound of footsteps coming towards them made both men look up. The door of the room swung open, and there stood the enchanting Princess—clad in a dress of golden brocade that clung to her shapely figure. But it was not the spectacle of her beauty that made the two princes gasp. For Parizad had no need to speak—her decision was obvious : around the lovely column of her neck was clasped Khan's pearl-necklace.

And then Parizad spoke. "Both of you," she said, "are strong and handsome, both of you are rich; both of you chose impressive presents. But"—and here she paused—"Khan's present showed how much he thought of me, while yours", she said, turning to Aslam, "showed how much you thought of yourself. Therefore I choose Khan for my husband."

The Yellow Rose

(Traditional)

There was a king who had a daughter, perfect in every particular, but as she had no mother she was melancholy; and whatever kindness the king showed by way of consolation had no effect and brought no smile.

One day the king came in from his quarters to the harem and, as was his wont, he went to his daughter's room. Seeing that she was more distressed than usual, he asked, "My dear, tell me what is worrying you. If there is anything on earth that I can do for you, just let me know. Even if you ask for the moon, I'll get it for you."

His daughter replied, "I do not know myself what I want and what makes me so sad, but if you'll let me, I'll go out hunting for a few days. There's possibility that my spirits will return and my nerves be rested."

"All right", said the aged king. He sent some girls of her own age to accompany her.

They got on the horses, dressed like men, and left the city at the auspicious hour chosen by the astrologers. Just around noon they reached

a river bank with trees around. The place was remarkably pleasant. The king's daughter said to the girls and maid-servants, who were accompanying her: "This is a nice place. We will stay here for some days." The slaves dismounted and pitched on that very spot a tent for the Princess and one for the other girls, and a little farther off they set up tents for themselves.

After lunch they had a nap. The others were deep in sleep, but the Princess went to the river bank where she saw a yellow rose floating towards her. Her whole being was on fire at the sight of the rose and in her desire for it she clutched at the bank and went on to find a place where she could snatch it from the water. Quite unconsciously she followed the drifting rose for hours, till suddenly she came to herself and saw that the sun was setting and that she had gone a long distance away from her tent. "Good heavens," she cried, "what have I done? Now that the dark night has come upon me in this wilderness what place shall I make for, where shall I sleep to be safe from wild beasts?"

While she was thus pondering, the sky became dark and the stars began to twinkle. She

turned her gaze this way and that till she saw a tall tree. She went towards it and climbed up.

By chance it was a moonlit night and even the wilderness was not empty of delight. Before she had secured herself among the foliage, she could hear the sound of a mule bell and the hoofs of horses approaching. Scarcely had a few minutes passed when she saw a band of men and their baggage arrive, and at their head rode a tall handsome youth on a white horse, doubtless a prince who had lost his way. The prince liked the spot for a halting-place and gave orders to unload and set up tents. By chance the prince's tent was set up right under the very tree on which the princess had taken shelter.

It was the prince's custom to take a nap after the summons to the evening prayer; then he rose and dined. While the prince was asleep the butler brought a tray for the prince's dinner and put it on the table in his tent and went away. The girl who was watching all this from above came down, took a little rice and curry, and then climbed up the tree again.

Half an hour later the prince awoke and saw that the food brought for him was touched. His temper arose, he called his servants and

demanded to know who had touched his food. They answered "We don't know." The prince said nothing; he ate his dinner and went to sleep.

Next evening the dinner was set again as on the previous night. The girl came down once more and had her share. When the prince got up and saw the dinner, he made a great fuss. The same thing happened on the third night. The prince said to himself, "There's more in this than meets the eye." He kept his own counsel and next evening, lying on his bed he pretended to be asleep. Then he saw a girl as pretty as a picture coming down from the tree. She went straight to the tent and began eating the food. When she had finished eating, she stood up to climb the tree, but the prince seized her by the wrist and said, "Who are you? And what are you doing here?" The princess explained her case from beginning to end.

The prince was extremely pleased to hear her story. He said to her, "You needn't go up the tree, but stay with me in this tent. I am a prince and will have you as my wife." The girl consented. Next day the prince left for his native-land, accompanied by his bride-to-be, where

their wedding ceremony took place with great pomp and show.

Forty days after their wedding, the Princess said to her husband longingly, "My heart yearns to meet my old father." The Prince agreed. Both of them set out, but before reaching the city, the girl wrote a letter to her father, describing what had happened to her. After the disappearance of his daughter, the King had searched her in vain and therefore passed despairing days in great misery.

So now he was overjoyed to get the letter and to know that his daughter was coming with her husband. He went out to receive them. With great rejoicing he brought them into his city. The king was much delighted to see that God had restored his daughter. Having no heir, he chose the prince to succeed him. Shortly after the king died and the prince was able to succeed to two thrones and unite the two royal houses.

*Adam Khan and Durkhane**

Long ago there lived in one of the villages of Swat, Hasan Khan, a nobleman of the

Folk Tales compiled by Mrs. Zainab Ghulam Abbas, pp. 115—123.

Yousufzai tribe, who had a son called Adam Khan. The young man was both handsome and intelligent, and had in his blood all the fine characteristics of his forefathers. Born and reared in the romantic surroundings of the enchanting valley, he was keen observer of the beauties of nature and had a passion for his homeland, the songs of which he was never tired of singing to the accompaniment of his *rabab*, which he played with the skill of a master.

Besides being a talented musician, he was a fine horseman, and was often to be seen mounted on his horse, his *rabab* hanging by his side, galloping through the fields or over the hill tracks, in pursuit of a stag or some other wild animal of the woodlands. Sometimes, sitting astride his horse on the top of a hill, he would play upon his *rabab*, and the whole valley which lay before him would seem held under the spell of his enchanting music.

Hasan Khan adored him, and was proud of the fame his talented son had brought to the family. All the people of the valley greatly admired the young man and were wildly enthusiastic over his playing of the *rabab*. It was among the young girls that he counted his

most ardent admirers, and among whom there were many who cherished in their hearts the secret desire to be his bride.

It so happened that while Adam Khan was riding out one day in the valley, his horse stumbled. After recovering its foothold it was clear to him that something was wrong with one of its hoofs. He dismounted and to his dismay discovered that the horse had lost one of its shoes. As he was far from his own village, he was forced to lead it to the nearest one in order to have it re-shod.

While the blacksmith was attending to his horse, Adam Khan rested under a shady tree on a *charpai* (cot) in front of the smith's shop.

Soon he grew tired of having nothing to do. He took up his *rabab* and struck the strings with his plectrum. He played passionate folk tunes with such skill that one by one people stopped to listen until a small crowd had gathered around him. So engrossed was he in his playing that he seemed quite unaware of the presence of the crowd.

Now in this village there lived a wealthy and influential man called Taoos Khan, who had an

only daughter named Durkhane—a damsel of rare beauty and charm. Her father had taken pains to educate her well so that he might secure for her a good husband, which aim he had achieved before she had completed her sixteenth year.

Now while Adam Khan was sitting outside the blacksmith's shop, playing upon his *rabab*, Durkhane happened to be on her way to get the spindle of her spinning wheel sharpened by the blacksmith. As she approached, she was surprised to see a crowd gathered in the open space before the shop. She heard the sound of the *rabab*, and being fascinated, she drew near to listen.

The music enthralled her, and she stood a little aside from the crowd watching the handsome young man who sat playing upon his instrument so superbly under the tree and who seemed to be indifferent to the praise showered upon him every now and then by members of the crowd.

At last the blacksmith finished shoeing Adam's horse. Adam stopped playing and, having acknowledged the warm-hearted praise of

the crowd, he got up and paid the blacksmith generously. He mounted his horse and was about to ride away when all of a sudden he caught sight of a young girl of exquisite beauty, dressed in black, standing at a little distance. She was looking at him intently, her eyes filled with admiration. He quivered in his heart. He saw a pair of unearthly dark black eyes looking at him with unspeakable longing ; an unknown feeling of joy and deepest sorrow stirred within him. As their eyes met, she instantly lowered hers, overwhelmed with modesty, and hurriedly went into the blacksmith's shop.

Adam stared after her in bewilderment. Who could she be? From where had she come? It was with difficulty that he tore himself away from the place. After going a few yards, he turned round for another longing look at the door of the shop before he finally rode away.

That evening, when he reached home, his heart filled with a strange excitement. The girl whom he had seen that day outside the smith's shop had perhaps always been living in his imagination, and it seemed to him that until now all the passion he had poured out in song had really been directed towards her.

He played late into the night upon his *rabab* until, through sheer exhaustion, he fell asleep, his head resting upon his instrument. By the time he woke the sun had risen high in the sky. It was his custom to go to his father's room every morning early, but this morning it was his father who had come to him.

"My son," he asked, "what makes you sleep so late? Your mother tells me that you have not touched food since you returned last night. Are you well?"

Adam assured his father that there was nothing wrong with him, and his father, knowing the strange way of his whimsical musician, did not press him any further; but the following day when Hasan Khan found his son in the same state, he was alarmed.

"My son is ailing in some way," he said to himself, and questioned him again. Adam, after some reluctance, confessed to his father, saying, "Oh father, I have found the girl I wish to marry," and he related to him the events of that memorable day. Hasan Khan pondered quietly for some time; then he smiled gently and left the room without a word.

Now Adam had two very devoted friends. The name of one was Meero and of the other Balo. Both of them were also great admirers of Adam Khan's skill in music, especially Meero, who was himself an accomplished player of the *rabab*. Later that day Hasan called both of them.

"Seek out the father of the girl," he told them, "and tell him that Hasan Khan, chief of the clan of Yousafzais pays his compliments to him and desires the hand of his daughter for Adam Khan, his only son."

The two friends straight away set out upon their errand, promising to return the following day. Both father and son awaited their return with impatience. They had been successful in tracing the girl. The blacksmith had remembered Durkhane, the girl in black, who had come to have her spindle sharpened just after Adam had left the shop. From there they had gone directly to the house of Taoos Khan, who was very courteous to them, but had regretted that the hand of his daughter had already been promised to a wealthy man called Payao.

Adam, who had been listening with eagerness suddenly became rigid. A strange pallor came over his face. He put his hand to his heart, as though

in sudden pain. From this time onwards Adam could find no peace.

While he was in this state, Durkhane was no better. From the day she happened to come across the young minstrel, a great desire, unexperienced before, had possessed her. The image of the young stranger filled all her thoughts and occupied her whole being. She knew it was a hopeless affair, as she was already betrothed to another man—a man whom she had never seen and his only qualification seemed to her was his wealth. Thus she passed her days in uncertainty and despair.

One day an old woman, a distant relative of hers, came to see her while Taoos Khan was out. After some preamble she disclosed the real object of her visit. She had come on behalf of a youth who had fallen desparately in love with Durkhane, and who had implored her to carry a message from him to his beloved. The woman finding the unfortunate youth in such a state of despair, had finally consented out of sheer pity.

"But who is he?" asked Durkhane with a throbbing heart.

"His name is Adam Khan. He saw you the day he came to this village to have his horse shod."

"And what is his message?" she asked in a voice which was scarcely audible.

The old woman paused for a moment as if to recollect the words of the message. Then she spoke: "Be mine, O fair Durkhane, for I love you and must die if you forsake me."

On hearing these words tears streamed down Durkhane's cheeks.

"Tell him," she replied softly, "that I feel the same for him, but that we must try to forget each other as my father has already betrothed me to another man."

After this the old woman came several times to Durkhane's house. Then one night, when Taoos Khan happened to be away on some business, a meeting of the two lovers was arranged at Durkhane's house. They met. For quite a long time not a word was spoken. They just stared at each other in bewilderment. Adam looked right into Durkhane's dark black eyes from which the warmest love was beaming.

Finally, trembling with passion, he broke the silence.
"Do not forsake me," he beseeched her.

"How could I forsake you," Durkhane replied tenderly, "for you are all my life."

They talked, they sobbed, they sighed throughout the night. One by one the stars in the sky faded; the early morning breeze began to blow. Suddenly one of her father's sheep bleated.

"Oh, accursed sheep of my father," Durkhane cried out in despair, "may your throat be cut for you have separated me from my love." And thus in anguish Adam took leave of his beloved.

A few days after the meeting of the two lovers, Payao pressed Taoos Khan, his would-be father-in-law to finalize the marriage without further delay, as the bride had reached the marriageable age. Durkhane was dismayed when she saw her father eager to comply with the request. She tried to have the wedding postponed by pretending to be unwell, but her father would not listen to her, for he did not want to displease the rich Payao, and proceeded forthwith with the wedding arrangements.

When Adam came to hear about the forthcoming marriage, he was stricken with grief, but he could do nothing and fell into a despair that consumed all the happiness of his life.

On the day which was fixed for the marriage Payao came with great pomp and splendour, and took away Durkhane, as a cow at a fair is taken away by the highest bidder.

Now Adam was really in distress, and his father, fearing for the life of his son, sought the help of a fiery chieftain, an old acquaintance of his, whose name was Meermai and who had a number of fighting men under him. The chivalrous instinct of the old chieftain flared up when he heard of the plight of Adam, who had accompanied his father to his abode in the hills.

"Cheer up, young man," he said, patting Adam on the back, "you will soon be united with your beloved, Durkhane."

Two days after, Payao's house was raided and Durkhane was taken away by force. It was deemed wise to keep her among Meermai's womenfolk till a proper divorce was obtained from her husband.

Payao was mad with fury at this sudden outrage upon the dignity of his house, but he

realized that he could gain nothing by the use of force against such a powerful man, so he resorted to another tactic, that is a bribe. Meermai could not resist the offer of a large sum of money and so he returned the girl to her husband.

This unexpected turn of events broke Adam's heart. His father tried desperately to rally his spirits by promising to marry him to the most beautiful and most sought-after girl in the valley; but all his efforts were in vain. There was no love in his heart for any one but Durkhane. He took to his bed, and died a few days later.

Dukhane received the news of her lover's death calmly. She felt that only her own death could bring peace to her mortally tortured soul. On her death-bed she expressed the wish that she wanted to hear the sound of Adam's *rabab* before she died.

Payao, seeing the agony in the expression of her eyes, realized that her life was fast ebbing out, and he hastened to comply with her request. He sent immediately for Adam Khan's father.

It was Meero, Adam Khan's dearest friend, who brought the *rabab* to Durkhane as she lay on her bed in a semi-conscious state. Meero started

playing softly on the instrument of his deceased friend. At first Durkhane gave no indication that she was even aware of Meero's presence in the room but after a little while she opened her eyes and appeared to be listening intently. Slowly life crept back to her sunken eyes. Her face lit up with a smile. She remained thus listening and smiling for some time. "My minstrel," she murmured. Then, as Meero played on, her life quietly slipped away.

There is a place called Bazdara in the valley of Swat where lie the twin graves of the two lovers. They are built upon a piece of raised ground, surrounded by four stone walls. Strange stories are related about these graves. It is said that at first only Adam Khan was buried there, but later Durkhane's body was discovered to be lying by his side.

These graves are shaded by a berry tree, many of the branches of which have been removed because *rabab* players, coming from near and far to pay homage to the lovers, have hacked off pieces of its wood to make their plectrums, in the belief that their use would bring them success in the art of ***rabab***-playing.

*Zal and Rudabeh**

Zal was the son of Sam, a native of Seistan. He was born with white hair, which greatly disappointed his father, who set his heart against his son and ordered the babe to be taken to the mountain and abandoned there. *Simurgh*, the roc of fables, had its nest on this mountain. The bird, being attracted by the abandoned child, took it in its charge and fed and brought it up. In the meantime Sam had a dream in which he was told of his white-haired son's growth and prowess. The very next day Sam started out for the hills, where he found his son.

Zal, an attractive youth, endowed by nature with courage and a spirit of adventure, resolved to have an extensive tour. During his sojourn at Kabul, King Mehrab was very much impressed by his personality, and entertained him with honour and pomp. In one of the entertainments, one of Mehrab's courtiers described to Zal the

*A story from the *Shanama* of Abul Qasim Firdausi. This Poet has the unique gift of selecting the choicest words and expressions in narrating a particular scene. This is a sample of his masterpiece, a part which relates to courtship in ancient Afghanistan.

exquisite beauty of Princess Rudabeh, daughter of Mehrab, in these words :

He hath a daughter in his house whose face
Is fairer than the sun ; like ivory her skin
From head to foot ; like spring is her complexion,
As a tree is she in stature. Two musky ringlets
Fall over her silvery neck, the end of which
Would serve for an ankle ring. Her cheeks are like
Pomegranate blossoms ; she has cherries for lips.
Her silver breast bears two pomegranate grains,
Her eyes are twin narcissi in a garden :
Their lashes—blackness rapt from raven's plumes.
Her brows are like two bows made at Taraz
Mantled with the purest musk. The moon would'st thou have ?
There is her face. The musk would'st thou seek ?
There is her hair. From head to foot
She is a paradise—All music, charm and beauty.

This panegyric raised a fire of emotion in Zal's breast. Rudabeh, on her part, also became interested in the newcomer. One day she confided the secret of her love to her maids, who were shocked at the idea and assured her that her father's consent to her marriage with a

white-haired old man could never be obtained. To dissuade her they pleaded with her thus :

Hath modesty departed from thine eyes,
That thou should'st long to clasp upon thy bosom,
One whose own father hath rejected him ?
Monstrous is a white-haired child,
And offspring from such a one is not seemly,
Thy figure and face are such that the very sun
Would come from the four heavens to become thy spouse.

Rudabeh, thereupon, became very angry and declared passionately that Zal meant more to her than did the mighty kings on the earth. The maids, touched by her earnestness and her grief, sought all possible means by which to aid her. So it came to pass that on a certain night Zal came to the foot of Rudabeh's bower, that perched high up on the towering walled castle. Presently, Rudabeh appeared above like some enchanting fairy, and breathed his name softly. But the lofty parapet where she stood prevented Zal from seeing her face. He, therefore, begged to be allowed one glimpse of the fairest face on the earth; so she loosened her long black hair and bade him use her tresses as a rope for

ascending the castle. Firdausi describes this scene thus:

She of the fairy face heard the warrior's words
And doffed her scarlet wimple.
Then from her head, as from some tree top, she loosed
A lasso, matchless braid of musk.
Coil within coil it was and snake on snake
Strand upon strand it lay upon her neck.
She loosened her tresses over the battlements
And when they straightened out they reached the ground.
Then spake Rudabeh from the wall above,
"O Paladin, O child of the warrior race,
Now speed thee quickly and gird thy loins
Exert thy lion breast and royal hands,
I have cherished these tresses
With which to help my beloved."

Zal shrank from using the scented hair as a ladder. Bestowing kisses upon her beautiful locks, he released them. Then, procuring a lasso from his page, he flung it aloft and climbed hastily to the bower of bliss and passed the night

in his beloved's arms. This is Firdausi's rendering of the meeting :

One of the fairy face advanced to welcome him, she clasped his hand.
And both intoxicated with love descended,
Hand clasped in hand, to her pavilion ;
Gold arabesqued it was, a meeting place of kings,
A paradise adorned, a blaze of light, and
Slave girls attended the Houri there,
While Zal in rapt attention beheld
Her face, her hair, her loveliness and grace.
Zal sat in royal grace by that fair moon,
His dagger in his belt, and on his head
A ruby coronet. Rudabeh looked
With stolen glances at him still,
Looked at form, that grace, that height.
The more she gazed the more her heart inflamed.
They kissed and clung intoxicated with love,
But the lion did not molest the Doe.
So fared they till the day began to break
And drum-call sounded. Zal parted from his love,
Embracing her as warp and woof embrace.
Both wept and adjured the rising Sun,
"Oh Glory of the world, one moment more,
Thou needst not rise so hastily.

Having a very high opinion of Zal, the Queen was greatly distressed by the fear of her husband's anger when she heard the news. She, therefore, with a trembling voice broke the news to him. The King was beside himself with rage, and, drawing his sword, threatened to kill his daughter. Firdausi puts the incident in these words:

Thereat Mehrab sprang up and seized his sword by the hilt,
His cheeks grew livid and his body shook.
With rage his heart was full, he groaned and cried :
"I should have cut her head off at her birth,
She has wrought on me this evil."

The Queen, however, assured him that Zal was of noble birth and noted for his valour and chivalry. She succeeded in reducing her husband to a calmer frame of mind, and ultimately prevailed upon the King to give his consent to the proposed union of the two lovers. The wedding was celebrated with pomp and festivities lasting a week. Rudabeh, later on, became the mother of Rustam, the legendary hero of ancient Afghanistan.*

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*The *Ahang*, Delhi ; Vol. 1, pp. 16—20.

CHAPTER VI

ONE HUNDRED DARI (AFGHAN PERSIAN) PROVERBS*

Good news travels fast and so do good proverbs. These will be claimed by countries from Albania to India, but are called *Afghan Persian Proverbs* because they are in current usage in Afghanistan. They enter into the real flow of life and express the vibrant culture of the people. They deal with friendships, hospitality, and the homespun wisdom of family life. Also, they may give glimpses into bazaar situations and country farms as well as into the habits of insect and wild animals. They also portray the value of truth and morality as well as the benefits of belief in God.

The people of Asia are extremely fond of proverbs, and the Afghans are no exception. If a person who is learning the language can quote a proverb suitable to the occasion, the response evoked is surprisingly appreciative, and at times even results in applause. Quoting an appropriate

*Compiled by Rev. Dr. J. Christy Wilson, Jr.

proverb is the crown of a conversation, getting the point across without further explanation.

Unfortunately, much Western culture has lost an appreciation for proverbs. They are often considered *trite cliche's* or speech forms used by people who do not engage in original thinking. This is not true, however, in Asia. Here they are looked upon with appreciation as authoritative expressions of cumulative knowledge. To the people of these countries, with their rich heritage, these proverbs contain something like the convincing proof that a scientific experiment has in the West. Quoting a suitable proverb at the end of a statement has an effect similar to that of writing *Q. E. D.* at the end of a geometric theorem.

ONE HUNDRED KABUL PERSIAN PROVERBS

1. The first day you meet, you are friends. یک روز دیدی دوست
   The next day you meet, you are brothers. دیگر روز دیدی برادر
   Meaning: Friendship grows into brotherhood.

2. There is a way from heart to heart. دل رابه دل راه است
   Meaning: Love finds a way to another's heart.

3. A real friend is one who takes the hand of his friend in times of distress and helplessness. دوست آنست که گیرد دست دوست در پریشان حالی و درماند گی
   Meaning: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

4. Flourish like a flower, but may your life be longer. خودت گل باشی ولی عمرت نه
   Usage: When one is offered some flowers.

5. No rose is without thorns. هیچ گل بی خار نیست
   Meaning: No one is perfect.
   To reach your beloved you have to suffer a lot.

6. One flower doesn't bring spring. یک گل بهار نمیشود
   Meaning: One swallow doesn't make spring.
   Usage: Said of a person who tries to do too much himself.

7. A good year is determined by its spring. سال نیکو از بهارش پیداست

Meaning: As goes the spring, so goes the year.

Usage: Character and quality show up early.

8. Whatever you sow you reap. هرچه بکارید همان رامیدروید

Meaning : A person gets his just deserts.
As you sow so shall you reap.

9. There is a path to the top of even the highest mountain. کوه هر قدر بلند باشد باز هم سر خود راه دارد

Meanings : (*a*) **There is no difficulty which cannot be overcome.**

(*b*) Where there is a will there is a way.

10. A tree doesn't move unless there is wind. تا شمال نباشد درخت شور نمیخورد

Meaning: Where there is smoke there is fire, or every effect has a cause.

11. A river is not contaminated by having a dog drink from it. به لق لق سگ دریا مردار نمیشود

Meaning: One of good character is pure despite criticism.

12. A tilted load won't reach its destination. بار کج بمنزل نمیرسد

Meaning: Honesty is the best policy.

13. It's the same donkey, but with a new saddle. خر همان خرست لاکن پالانش نوشده

Meaning: Clothes do not make the man.

Usage: Said of some one who has recently gained a high position unworthily.

14. Reading Scripture in front of a donkey. پیش کلهٔ خر یا سین خواندن

Meaning: Casting pearls before swine.

15. Without a green switch the ox and the donkey won't obey. تا نبا شد چوب تر فرمان نبرد گاو خر

Meaning: "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

16. Don't stop a donkey that isn't yours. به خری که کار نداری ایشه مگو

Meaning: Mind your own business.

17. There are twenty-five uncaught sparrows for a penny. گنجیشکه ناگر فته پیسه را بیست و پنج تا

Meaning: A bird in hand is worth two in the bush, or wishes are a dime a dozen.

18. A porcupine speaking to its baby says, "O my child of velvet". خارپشت چوچهٔ خود را میگو ید ! بخملی بچیم

Meaning: One's own child looks beautiful.

19. A wolf's pup will grow into a wolf even though it be raised among men. عاقبت گرگ زاده گرگ شود گرچه با آدمی بزرگ شود

Meaning: Training cannot change heredity: or, you cannot change a leopards's spots: or, what is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.

20. A lion at home, and a fox abroad. شیر خانه رو باهٔ بیرون

Meaning: A big frog in a little pond becomes a little frog in a big pond: or, every dog is a lion at home.

21. They asked the fox, "Who is your witness ?" He said, "My tail." روباه را گفتند که شاهدت کیست گفت دمم

Meaning: Collusion is suspected: or, one witness for his own benefit.

22. A fox is in trouble because of his own pelt. روباه از دست پوست خود در عذاب است

Meaning: A person's own talents or possessions can involve him in trouble, thus becoming his own worst enemy

23. He is riding the donkey, but has lost the donkey. سر خر سوار و خر را گم کرد

Meaning: If it had been a snake, it would have bitten you; or, he has his hat on, but is looking for it.

24. Having been bitten by a snake, he's afraid of a rope. مار گزیده از ریسمان میترسد

Meaning: Once bitten, twice shy: or, not making the same mistake twice.

25. In an ant colony dew is a flood. در خانه مورچه شبنم طوفان است

Meaning: A little misfortune means much to one in need.

26. Even if there is only bread and onions, still one can have a happy face.

نان و پیاز پیشانی باز

Meaning : "Be content with such things as you have."
Usage: Simple food is welcome if the host serves it with a happy face.

27. God said, "Eat and drink." but He didn't say, "Gorge to the full (up to your throat)."

خدا گفت کو لو وشر بو
نه گفت کلو تا گلو

Meaning: God wants us to eat and drink but not to overeat: or, we are to eat to live and not live to eat.

28. Every anguish passes except the anguish of hunger.

غمی هر چیز میرود لیکن غمی
شکم نه

Meaning: One can forget other troubles, but not of food.

29. A warm fire is better than delicious cooked rice.

الو الو به از پلو

Meaning: Warmth is more important than food.

30. One who doesnt's appreciate the apple, won't appreciate the orchard.

کسیکه قدری یک سیو نه فهمد
قدر باغ نمی فهمد

Meaning: If we don't appreciate little things, we won't appreciate great things.

31. Two watermelons can't be held in one hand. دو تر بوز در یک دست گرفته نمیشود

Meaning: If you have too many preoccupations, you will succeed at none of them.

Usage: You cannot ride two horses at a time.

32. Salt preserves meat, but what can be done with salt if it turns bad. گوشت که گنده شد نمک میز نند نمک که گنده شود آنرا چه ز نند

Meaning: Ordinary people can be corrected, but how can one correct teachers, leaders and preachers: or, if salt has lost its savor it is good for nothing.

33. A mother won't give milk to her child until he cries. تا که طفل در یه نکند مادر شیر نمید هدش

Meaning: Unless we ask for something, we don't get it.

34. Even if a knife is made of silver, a person won't stab his own heart with it. کارد اگر از نقره هم شود کسی در دل خود نمیز ند

Meaning: Don't side with your best friend or even with your son if he is in the wrong.

35. A new servant can catch a running deer. نوکر نو آهو را بدو میگیرد

Meaning: A person who is new at a job is overly energetic in an attempt to make a good impression.

36. My drum doesn't do what I want it to. من چه میگو یم وطنبوره ام چه میگو ید

Meaning: Used when a servant, child or student doesn't do what you have told him to do.

37. Only stretch your foot to the length of your blanket. پایترا برابر گلیمت دراز کن

Meaning: "Cut your coat according to your cloth." or, don't overstretch your bounds.

38. Walls have mice and mice have ears. دیوار ها موش دار ند موش ها گوش

Meaning: Secrets told are spread abroad.

39. He ran out from under a leaking roof and sat in the rain. از زیر چکک گریخت و ز یر باران نشست

Meaning: Out of the frying pan into the fire.

40. Without investigating the water, don't take off your shoes (to walk through it). آب ندیده موزه را از پا ی مکش

Meaning: "Look before you leap."

41. Five fingers are brothers but are not equals. پنج انگشت برادرست برابر نیست

Meaning: Although people may be related by family or nationality each person nevertheless is different.

42. A broken hand can work but a broken heart can't. دست شکسته کار میکند ولی دلی شکسته نه

Meaning: A physical handicap can be overcome but a wounded spirit cannot be overcome.

43. May God not make one hand dependent on the other. خدا یکد ست را محتاج دیگر دست نکند

Meaning: Each one should bear his own burdens and shoulder his own responsibilities.

44. Hearing is never as good as seeing. شنیده کی بود مانند دیده

Meaning: One picture is worth thousands of words.

45. A bad wound heals, but a bad word doesn't. زخم بد جور میشود گپ بد نه

Meaning: A cruel tongue does more harm than a sharp sword.

46. If you sit with us, you will get like us; if you sit beside a cooking pot, you will get black. با مانشینی ما شوی با دیگ نشینی سیاه شوی

Meaning: You reflect the company you keep.

47. Not to be considered queer, conform to the crowd. خواهی نشوی رسوا هم رنگ جامعت باش

Meaning: If you don't want to look silly, look like others.

or, When you are in Rome do as the Romans do.

48. Between brother and brother, accounts should be square. برادر به برادر سابش برابر

Meaning: Even among friends, business should be carried on on an exact basis.

49. One gives by tons, but takes accounts by ounces. بخشش بخروار حساب بمثقال

Meaning: Give liberally, but do business exactly.

50. No one says his own buttermilk is sour. کس نمیگو ید که دوغ من ترش است

Meaning: No one advertizes his own faults.

51. Good perfume is known by its own scent rather than by the perfumer's advertisement. مشک آنست که خود بگوید نه که عطار

Meaning: A good tree is known by its fruit; or, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

52. Poor iron won't make a a sharp sword. آهن بد شمشیر بر ان نمیشود

Meaning: You can't get quality out of inferior raw material.

53. A cheap thing doesn't lack defect, nor an expensive thing quality. ارزان بی علت نیست و قیمت بی حکمت

Meaning: You get what you pay for.

54. Vinegar, that is free, is sweeter than honey. سرکه مفت از عسل شیرین تر است

Meaning: People love getting something for nothing.

55. Debt severs (is the scissors of) love. قرض مقراض محبت است

Meaning: Lend money to a friend, and he'll become an enemy.

56. Too many butchers spoil the cow. قصاب که بسیار شد گاؤ مردار میشود

Meaning: Too many cooks spoil the broth.

57. He has soaked a hundred heads (preparing them for shaving), but hasn't shaved one. صد سر را تر کرده یکی را کل نه

Meaning: Used of a person who starts a lot but doesn't finish and so has many monuments to unfinished business.

58. The potter drinks water from a broken jug. کلال در تیکر شکسته آب میخورد

Meaning: Used of a physician who doesn't heal himself, or of one who helps others but does't help himself.

59. What's a trumpeter's job ? To blow. سرنی چی راچیست یک پف

Meaning: An adviser, teacher or preacher can only instruct, it is up to the hearer to act.

60. Unless God does it, what can a doctor do ? تا نکند حبیب چه کند طبیب

Meaning: If God doesn't cure a person, a physician can't; or, man may plant and water, but God must bring the increase.

61. Blood cannot be washed out with blood. خون بخون شسته نمیشود

Meaning: Two wrongs don't make a right.

62. The sieve says to the strainer, "You have holes." چغل چلم صاف رامیگو ید سوراخ داری

Meaning: Used of a guilty person who finds faults with others.

63. You can't clap with one hand. صدا از یک دست نمی برا ید

Meaning: (*a*) It takes two to make a fight.
(*b*) Many hands make light work; or, in union there is strength.

64. Don't be a thief and you won't fear the king. دزد نباشی از پادشا نترس

Meaning: The righteous are as bold as a lion."

65. Look after your property, and you won't accuse your neighbour of being a thief. مالت را هوش کن همسایه را دزد نگیر

Meaning: If one takes proper care of his possessions, he won't have to suspect his neighbour of stealing.

66. I've never seen anyone lost who followed along the rightway. کس ندیدم که گم شد از راه راست

Meaning: You'll never go wrong by doing right.

67. A liar is forgetful. دروغ گو حافظه ندارد

Meaning: A dishonest person can't remember to be consistent.

68. Under his bowl there is a little bowl. زیر کاسه اش نیم کاسه ایست

Meaning: A person smells a rat; or there is a trick to his trade; or, "there is something rotten in the state of Denmark".

69. He appreciates prosperity who is caught in calamity. قدر عافیت آن داند که بمصیبت گرفتار شود

Meaning: Troubles make us appreciate our blessings; or, we never know the worth of water until the well runs dry.

70. If a forest catches fire, both the dry and the wet will burn up. جنگل که در گرفت تر و خشک میسوزد

Meaning: When trouble comes, it overtakes guilty and innocent alike.

71. When water goes over your head, what difference if it's one fathom or a hundred fathoms. آب که از سر پرید چه یک نیزه چه صد نیزه

Meaning: As well be hung for a sheep as lamb.

72. Don't sprinkle salt on wound. سر زخم نمک پاش مده

Meaning: Don't aggravate a person's trouble; or, don't attack a man while he is down.

73. Forget the past, but look out into the future. گذشته را صلواة و آینده را احتیاط

Meaning: What has happened is water under the bridge, but don't let it happen again.

74. In the ditch where water has flowed, it will flow again. به جویکه آب رفته باشد باز خواهد آمد

Meaning: Previous prosperity will follow disaster; or, History repeats itself.

75. One who runs will also fall. دویدن افتیدن هم دارد

Meaning: Hurry makes curry.

76. Hasty work doesn't succeed. کار هول تا سر نمیرسد

Meaning: Haste makes waste, or, a watch pot never boils.

77. He hasn't time even to scratch his head. برائی سر خاریدن هم بیکار نمیشود

Meaning: He is as busy as a one-armed paper hanger.

78. Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet. صبر تلخ است لاکن بر شیرین دارد

Meaning: All things come to him who waits.

79. A river is made drop by drop. قطره قطره دریا میشود

Meaning: Every little bit counts; or, progress comes from accomplishing many small things.

80. The seeker is the finder. جو یندہ یا بندہ

Meaning: "Seek and ye shall find."

81. Smart people get the point from a single hint. عاقلان بیک نقطۂ میرسند

Meaning: A word to the wise is sufficient. Wise men think alike.

82. Two are better than one, and three than two. از یکی کر دہ دو خوب است و از دو کردہ سہ

Meaning: Two minds are better than one, and three than two.

83. A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend. از دوست نادان دشمن دانا بہتر است

Meaning: Seek good advice no matter what its source.

84. The right answer to a fool is silence. جواب ابلهان خاموشی است

Meaning: You will get into trouble if you argue with a fool and therefore silence is golden.

85. As long as there are fools in the world, no one will be penniless. تا احمق در جهان است مفلس در نمی ماند

Meaning: Spendthrifts are foolish.

86. Ask the truth from a child. راستی را از طفل بپرس

Meaning: An innocent child will give a true answer.

87. Being clean is the half of faith. نظافت نصف ایمان است

Meaning: Cleanliness is next to godliness.

88. The world lives on hope. دنیا به امید خورده میشود

Meaning: Don't get discouraged because we must have hope to live and work aright.

89. Let Christians practice their own religion, and let Jews practice theirs. عیسیٰ بدین خو موسیٰ بدین خود

Meaning: People should have freedom of religion.

90. Saying salam is a sign of true faith. سلام سلامتی ایمان ست

Meaning: A sincere greeting is an expression of real religion.

91. Glory is fitting to God alone. بزرگی تنها به خدا میز بد

Meaning: A person should not be proud.

92. If you don't recognize God, at least know Him by His power. خدا را گر نمیشناسی به قدرت هایش بشناس

Meaning: A person who doesn't believe in God should know He exists by His works in nature.

93. When God gives, He doesn't ask whose son a person is. خدا که میدهد نمیپرسد که بچهٔ کیست

Meaning: God blesses without partiality or without regard for birth, rank or importance.

94. What my heart desired didn't happen; what God wanted was really done. آنچه دلم خواست نه آن شد آنچه خدا خواست همان شد

Meaning: Man proposes, God disposes.

95. God isn't in need of our prayers. خدا به عبادت ما محتاج نیست

Meaning: God hears us out of His mercy alone.

96. Start moving so that God may start blessing. حرکت کن که خدا برکت کند

Meaning: We must do our part for God to bless; or, God helps those who help themselves.

97. In childhood you're playful, in youth you're lustful, in old age you're feeble. So when will you worship God? در خوردی پستی در جوانی مستی در پیری سستی پس خد را کی پرستی

Meaning: It is easy to find excuses for not worshipping God.

98. Fear the person who doesn't fear God. بترس از کسی که او نمیترسد از خدا

Meaning: Don't trust the man who doesn't trust in God.

99. May Kabul be without gold rather than without snow. کابل بی زر باشد بی برف نه

Meaning: Snow on the mountains around Kabul is more valuable to agriculture and life than gold.

100. Everyone's own country is Kashmir to him. برائی هر کس وطن خودش کشمیر ست

Meaning: There is no place like home.

From the Library of

Arthur Paul

Buzkashi : A national game played like polo but with the carcass of a goat or calf